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THESIS

**THE NATURE OF INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND
THE REGIONAL POWER POLITICS**

by

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June 2010

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**THE NATURE OF INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE REGIONAL
POWER POLITICS**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Afghan imbroglio from two angles: understanding the peculiar nature of insurgency being faced by the U.S. and NATO, and the ongoing power politics and conflicting interests of Afghanistan's neighbors and other important actors in the conflict. After nine years of a bloody Afghan conflict, which has engulfed the neighboring nuclear armed Pakistan as well, the U.S. is far from achieving its desired objectives in Afghanistan and the region. The U.S. strategy employed, so far, reflects serious deficiencies that encourage the insurgents to regroup for an organized resistance against the world's mightiest military coalition. Two important factors generally ignored by many analysts are: the impact of outstanding regional disputes and politics on the war, and the willingness of important actors in the conflict to help achieve its resolution. Due to the region's geo-strategic significance, major powers have conflicting economic and political interests beyond just fighting al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. By developing a better understanding of the nature of insurgency in Afghanistan and of the broader regional politics, the international community may yet find a respectable solution to an extremely complex situation in Afghanistan, a country surrounded by nuclear-armed rivals.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|---|
| ANA | Afghan National Army |
| ANP | Afghan National Police |
| CARs | Central Asian Republics |
| CN | Counter-Narcotics |
| COAS | Chief of the Army Staff |
| COIN | Counterinsurgency |
| CT | Counter-Terrorism |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas |
| FC | Frontier Constabulary |
| FC NWFP | Frontier Corps NWFP |
| FCR | Frontier Crime Regulations |
| FRs | Frontier Regions |
| GHQ | General Headquarters |
| GWOT | Global War on Terror |
| HiG | Hizb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced People |
| IEDs | Improvised Explosive Devices |
| IG | Inspector General |
| IHK | Indian Held Kashmir |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| ISI | Inter Services Intelligence |
| NA | Northern Alliance |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |

| | |
|-------|---|
| NPS | Naval Postgraduate School |
| NSG | Nuclear Suppliers Group |
| NWA | North Waziristan Agency |
| NWFP | North West Frontier Province |
| OEF | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| PA | Political Agent |
| POWs | Prisoners of War |
| QRF | Quick Reaction Force |
| RAW | Research and Analysis Wing |
| ROE | Rules of Engagement |
| ROZs | Reconstruction Opportunity Zones |
| SLOC | Sea Lanes of Communication |
| SOF | Special Operations Forces |
| SOTF | Special Operations Task Force |
| SSG | Special Services Group |
| SWA | South Waziristan Agency |
| TAPI | Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India |
| TNSM | Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Sharia Mohammadia |
| TTP | Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| UW | Unconventional Warfare |

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I. INTRODUCTION

Following the lightning success of the U.S. and anti-Taliban forces (i.e., the Northern Alliance [NA]) in overthrowing the Taliban regime in 2001, a gradual insurgency began to develop—particularly after the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 and lost its focus in Afghanistan. Despite a lapse of almost nine years, the U.S. is still struggling to consolidate its gains in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda has survived, whereas the Taliban has reorganized during the intervening period and is posing a serious threat to the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Historically, Afghanistan and the present day western provinces of Pakistan have remained intertwined because of overlapping ethnic, cultural, tribal and religious affinities. Any development on either side of the ill-defined border immediately impacts both countries. The porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly along the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), also enables the terrorists to escape counterinsurgency (COIN) operations launched by either side.

The modicum of legitimacy that the U.S. earned after the removal of the Taliban regime as an act of “self defense” has gradually dwindled due to the inability of the U.S. to exploit its initial success. The experience of the past nine years in Afghanistan has forced the U.S. to review its strategy in Afghanistan—with protecting the population having become the new “mission.”¹ At the same time, the Karzai government has failed to deliver and has not been able to establish its legitimacy amongst the Afghan population—despite its highly controversial re-election in 2009. The lack of security, along with corruption and drug trafficking have only helped the Taliban to become stronger in Afghanistan. The U.S.’s over-commitment in Iraq and neglect of Afghanistan are now proving fatal to regional and global peace and security.

Little attention has been paid to the power politics among regional and international actors who are struggling to dominate the region, as we remain mostly engrossed with the “war on terror” in Afghanistan—a term out of fashion since the changeover from the Bush administration. The conflicting interests of various actors

¹ Headquarters ISAF (Kabul), *ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance*, August 26, 2009. http://www.afghanconflictmonitor.org/NATO_ISAFCommanderCounterinsurgencyGuidance.pdf (accessed August 25, 2009).

have their roots in the Cold War era. Russia, China and Iran are suspicious of the U.S.'s prolonged stay in the region, whereas India and Pakistan are engaged with their own proxies behind the scenes. The region has immense geostrategic significance as it provides access to Central Asia's riches. But also, Afghanistan has a long history of being meddled in by neighbors and foreigners, and thus the present situation demands a strategy that must treat the region as a whole. Without broader positive support from Afghanistan's neighbors and other critical actors, the prospects of U.S. success remain minimal in Afghanistan.

A. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The scope of this qualitative study will be two-fold; understanding the peculiar nature of insurgency in Afghanistan and addressing the need for a positive role by Afghanistan's neighbors and other regional actors in resolving the conflict. The purpose of understanding the nature of Afghan insurgency will be to establish that a different set of tools are needed to handle the present situation—other than the conventional military surge and efforts to engineer democracy in a deeply tribal and unorthodox religious society. The purpose of exploring the other variable is to highlight the conflicting interests of various actors in the conflict and the quest for regional preeminence by a few states, which is consequently polluting the overall environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Minimizing the disagreements among the stakeholders and securing their positive support is necessary for the U.S. to achieve an honorable outcome and long-term stability in the region.

B. THESIS QUESTION AND IMPORTANCE

The question being answered in this thesis is: *“Is successful COIN possible in Afghanistan without positive support from Afghanistan's neighbors and other important actors in the conflict?”*

In view of the dynamics and history of conflict in the region, the question posed above is complex, but extremely important, as it involves regional and extra-regional powers having direct or indirect involvement and conflicting interests in Afghanistan. The failure to capture or kill al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders casts serious doubts on the

credibility of the coalition forces engaged in the region since 2001. The Obama administration's renewed focus on the region signals this administration's resolve to find a respectable solution, without wasting further time and precious U.S. resources. The announcement of an "AfPak" policy marked a heightened commitment by the Obama administration to the region. President Obama's desire to reach out to Russia, China and Iran, and even the 'moderate' Taliban to resolve the Afghanistan crisis reflects a positive shift in U.S. policy. The difficulty with a multilateral approach, however, is that it calls for respect of others' interests. It also demands a degree of compromise about one's own interests to meet a larger goal. How far the U.S. is willing to adjust its objectives in Afghanistan—both declared and implied—is yet to be determined.

C. METHODOLOGY

The framework for this thesis has been primarily derived from the inductive and deductive material available about the history of Afghanistan. This is critical to understanding the nature of insurgency in the region. The path diagram below describes the causal mechanisms with regard to my first hypothesis—understanding the nature of insurgency will facilitate a better outcome:

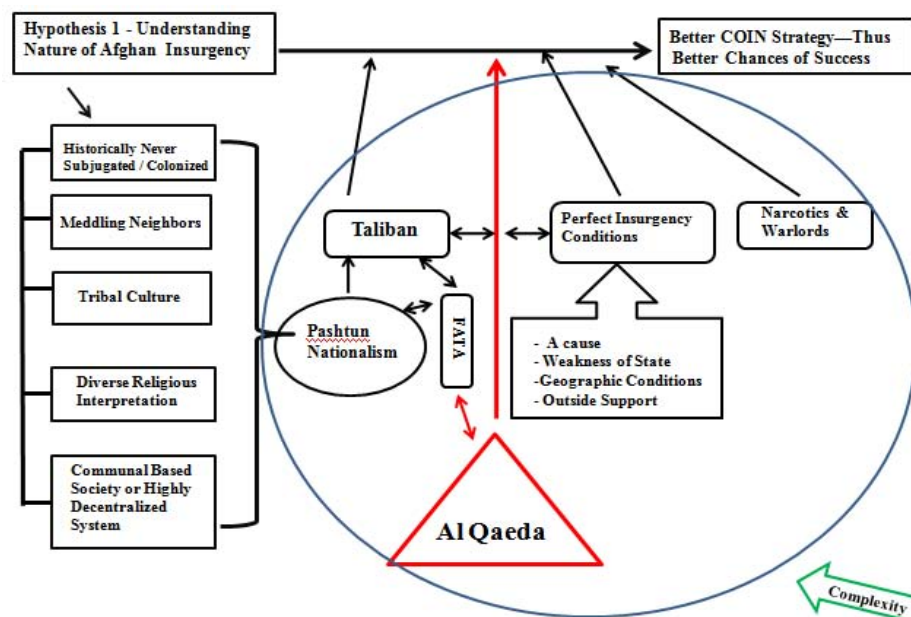


Figure 1. Hypothesis 1.

A brief description of each construct in Figure 1 provides insight into the complexities in Afghanistan, and their potential to spread from Afghanistan into Pakistan and beyond. The weaknesses in existing U.S. strategy thus far will be highlighted to support my argument that the U.S. lacks a sufficient understanding about the nature of insurgency in Afghanistan. As Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Professor Thomas Johnson asserts, there are great similarities between the U.S.'s reactions in Afghanistan and Vietnam. Chief among them is a lack of understanding about the nature of the threat and lack of a coherent strategy by the U.S.²

The second hypothesis concentrates primarily on the fourth corner in Professor Gordon McCormick's "Mystic Diamond" model for COIN, foreign actors, with the other three being the state, the counter-state, and the population.³

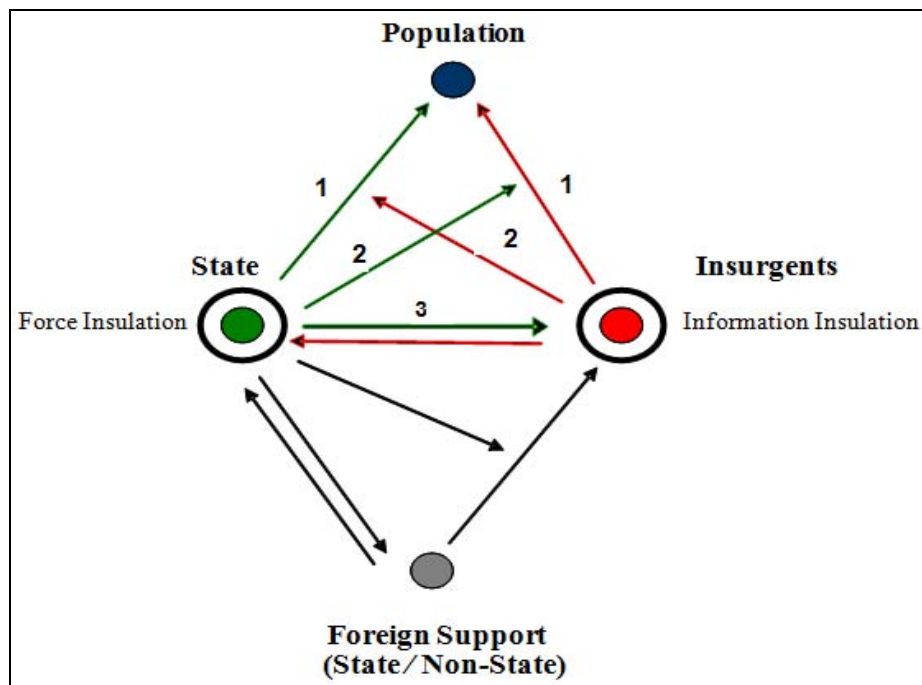


Figure 2. McCormick's Mystic Diamond Model.

² Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Afghanistan is Today's Vietnam. No Question Mark Needed." http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/20/saigon_2009 (accessed December 10, 2009).

³ Gordon McCormick (Head of the Defense Analysis Department, NPS), "Operationalizing the Insurgent / Counterinsurgent Process" (lecture, NPS, Monterey, CA, February 9, 2009).

As McCormick's Mystic Diamond suggests, the role played by Vietnam's neighbors and by Afghanistan's during the Soviet occupation proved to be critical to the outcome in each instance. In fact, in both conflicts neighbors supported the insurgents, which led to the defeat of the two superpowers involved. What thus needs to be explored in the current case is the nature of interests the neighbors and major actors have in the ongoing Afghanistan war. And, once these interests are understood, the question we must then ask is: is it possible to obtain positive support from Afghanistan's neighbors and other important actors for an honorable resolution of the conflict?

The path diagram below describes the causal mechanisms that inform my second hypothesis—about the need to elicit a more positive role by Afghanistan's neighbors and important actors to facilitate a better outcome:

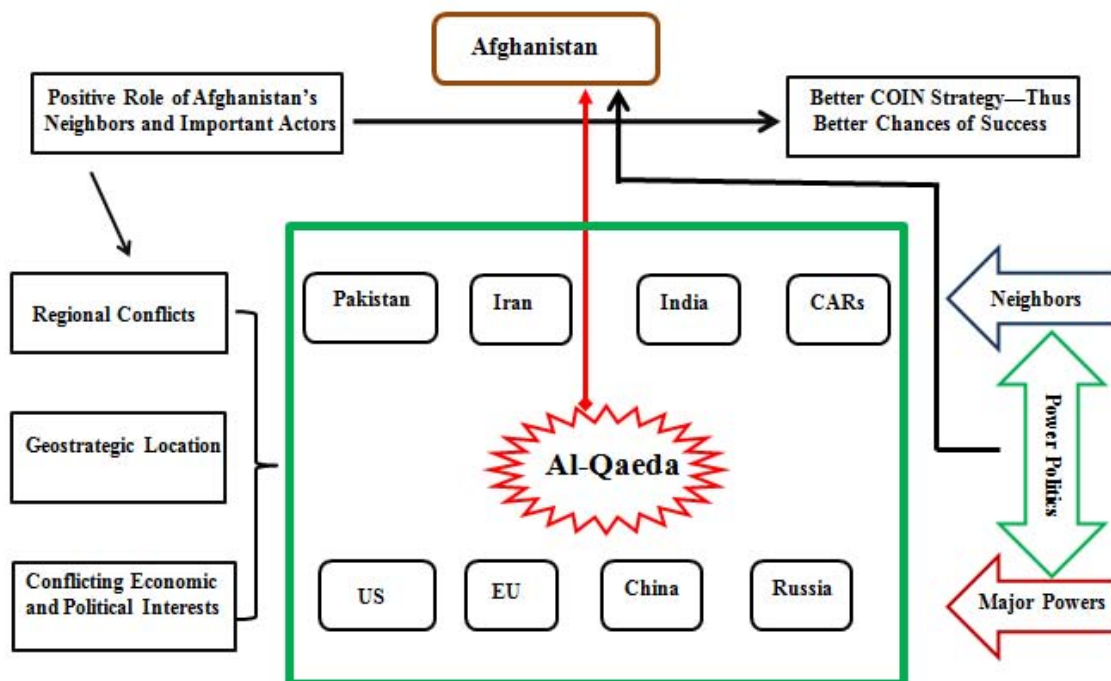


Figure 3. Hypothesis 2.

D. THESIS OUTLINE

1. Chapter I: Introduction

2. Chapter II: Understanding Afghanistan

This chapter will cover the role of history, culture, religion, and the ethnic dimensions of the Afghan conflict. Considering these factors, and assessing the strength of Pashtun nationalism and the Taliban-al-Qaeda confluence in Afghanistan and the FATA, should improve our understanding of Afghanistan and its relationship with Pakistan.

3. Chapter III: The Nature of Insurgency in Afghanistan

This chapter will review the causes of insurgency and the forms it has taken. Secondly, the chapter will analyze the peculiar nature of insurgency in Afghanistan to convince readers that the conflict there is unique and requires different treatment from any other contemporary insurgency.

4. Chapter IV: The Opposing Strategies

This chapter will first analyze insurgent strategies, followed by analysis of U.S. and Pakistani strategies in combating the threats in Afghanistan and the FATA. The purpose of this analysis is to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each side's strategies.

5. Chapter V: The Regional Power Politics

This chapter will briefly discuss the conflicting interests of Iran, India, China and Russia and their impact on the war in Afghanistan. The interests of the U.S. and Pakistan will likewise be discussed in order to illuminate the complexity of inter-relations in the region. This chapter should be helpful to those decision makers who are involved in policy review for Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the broader region.

E. CONCLUSION

No matter how well the U.S. and its coalition partners in Afghanistan and Pakistan do tactically, or in terms of micro measures on the ground, until the right policy and strategy are in place, no meaningful improvement can be expected. The inability of coalition forces to stabilize Afghanistan since 2001 indicates that there have been fundamental shortfalls in U.S. policy and military strategy right from the start. Pakistan, an important neighbor of Afghanistan and critical partner in the war there, is being destabilized, which is bound to further adversely affect regional stability. The focus of this thesis, therefore, is to highlight the importance of the bigger picture in terms of the regional environment instead of delving into micro issues—which themselves derive from the broader policy. The war in Afghanistan cannot be understood in isolation or independently without taking into account the complex political, economic, and security dynamics of this volatile but geostrategically significant region.

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II. UNDERSTANDING AFGHANISTAN

A. INTRODUCTION

The region that is present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan has witnessed decisive events in the past and has been characterized as the “cross-roads” of civilizations, thanks to the existence of the famous Silk Route.⁴ Consequently, the region has perhaps seen more invasions than any other in Asia, or indeed the world.⁵ Persians, Scythians, Macedonians and Greeks, Hans, Mongols, Arabs, Turks, Moguls, the British and the Soviets all attempted to conquer and subdue the Afghans (including tribal areas of Pakistan), but failed.⁶ Apart from serving as a staging area for invasions into India, Afghanistan provided an important trade link between the west and east, as well as north and south.

Afghanistan emerged as a nation-state in 1919 at the end of the third Anglo-Afghan war. However, the process of state consolidation began in 1747 with Ahmed Shah Abdali.⁷ Afghanistan is a state where history, tribal culture, geography, and religion have always mattered greatly and, therefore, needs to be dealt with discreetly. For instance, glancing back through important lessons learned by outsiders in Afghanistan and in the tribal areas of Pakistan can be extremely useful for understanding the characteristics of this volatile region. This chapter will briefly describe important features, the background of the Afghan Jihad, the complexities that inhere in FATA’s connections with Afghanistan, and the impact of the Durand Line on Pak-Afghan relations to include the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

⁴ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War; State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 159.

⁵ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C.- A.D 1957* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1958), 25.

⁶ Jerry J. Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), xii.

⁷ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 27.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF AFGHANISTAN

One thing that should never be overlooked is that the Soviet invasion in 1979 had three profound effects.⁸ First, disruption of the social structure and removal of the prewar elites led to the emergence of new political Islamists (Taliban), in addition to reinvigoration of an array of mujahidin parties. Second, violence became a norm in the society, even in non-combat situations. Third, the economic structure was completely destroyed, creating space for the resurgence of an opium-based economy.⁹ Being in a country as devastated as Afghanistan, and then seeing it through a western prism, can lead to wrong conclusions. Analyzing the present Afghan imbroglio, and its uncertain future, requires factoring those features that shape Afghanistan and its people, to include its recent history.

Numerous factors have made the emergence of Afghanistan as a cohesive state difficult, and these continue to present challenges. The five major factors distinguishing Afghanistan from any other state are: First, Afghan people are deeply divided along ethnic and linguistic lines. However, sectarian, tribal and racial divisions also exist—further compounding the social terrain. Second, diverse religious interpretations influence local tribal culture. Third, the social system is based on communal loyalties, which often override higher-order identities, thus, making Afghanistan a highly decentralized society. Fourth, the rugged terrain and lack of economic development increases the distance between the people and the central government. And fifth, Afghanistan has a long history of meddling neighbors due to its geo-strategic location.¹⁰

The above factors and the Afghan passion for independence have imparted a rugged individualism to the Afghans that is rare in other people.¹¹ Most of the Afghan tribes have remained self-sufficient and autonomous, agreeing to central control only in

⁸ Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 97.

⁹ Ninety-three percent of the World's Opium is produced in Afghanistan, which reached its highest ever production in 2006–07. For more details see report by Stephen Jones, UK Parliament. House of Commons. *Afghanistan and Narcotics: Opium Poppy Cultivation Trends 2001-2009*. SN/ IA/05025. <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/sn-05025.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2010).

¹⁰ Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 12–14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xii.

the face of an overwhelming foreign force. According to Jerry Roberts, “Afghanistan is perhaps a classic example of Machiavelli’s ‘state of many princes,’ in that, while easily entered, it has proven impossible to subdue.”¹² Though resistance has often remained localized, the diversity and autonomous character of Afghans has at times been advantageous to them, as foreigners are sucked into dealing with multiple targets instead of crushing one single entity that would thereby kill a rebellion. In other words, in the wake of weak central authority, Afghanistan has always been an easy state to invade.¹³ Although the Afghans claim to have never been conquered, they have never conventionally fought an invader on the borders or in the field either.¹⁴ Invaders have always been ousted through a protracted campaign. Muhammad Ali, an Afghan writer, explains:

One of the most dominant characteristics of the Afghan is his intense love of independence. The Afghan patiently bears his misfortunes or poverty but he cannot be made to reconcile himself to foreign rule.... Foreigners who have failed to understand this point and who have tried to deprive him of his national independence or personal freedom had to pay heavily for the price of folly.¹⁵

Afghanistan has never been a homogeneous country, but instead has always been a conglomeration of different tribes and ethnic groups. The Pashtuns are the dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan today and have always remained influential in Afghan society since the eighteenth century. Pashtuns are also the largest existing tribal society in the world.¹⁶ The Pashtuns are divided into three main groups. Members of the Durrani tribe, which ruled the country from 1749 to 1978, are primarily found north and west of Kandahar.¹⁷ Members of the Ghilzai tribe, who were defeated by the Duranis, are found in the east and north of Afghanistan. All other tribes, representing the third leg of the

¹² Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, xii.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Steve Coll, “The Case for Humility in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, October 16, 2009. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/10/16/the_case_for_humility_in_afghanistan (accessed December 12, 2009).

¹⁵ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, xii.

¹⁶ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

tribal triangle, are spread throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although there are roughly 25 different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, major ethnic groups and their overlapping distribution astride borders with neighbors can be depicted as follows:



Figure 4. Ethno-linguistic groups in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.¹⁸

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Population (millions) | 32.7 |
| Pashtun | 13.7 (42 %) |
| Tajik | 8.2 (27%) |
| Hazara | 2.9 (9%) |
| Uzbek | 2.9 (9%) |
| Aimak | 1.3 (4%) |
| Turkmen | 1.0 (3%) |
| Baloch | 0.7 (2%) |
| Others | 1.3 (4%) |

Table 1. Population and ethnic distribution in Afghanistan.¹⁹

Tribes remain the largest, permanent political and social entities in the country—allegiance of individuals almost never extends beyond these tribal units.²⁰ In the absence

¹⁸ Feroz H. Khan, "History of Afghanistan," (Presentation, NPS, Monterey, CA, January 2010).

¹⁹ Afghan Index, *Brookings*, December 7, 2009.
<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index20091207.pdf>
 (accessed January 21, 2010).

²⁰ Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War*, 14.

of invaders, inter-tribal rivalry takes off; however, in the face of foreign invasion all tribes unite. As Louis Dupree notes, “the two Pashtun tribes might fight each other to the death for control of Herat, Farah, and Qandahar [Kandahar], but any external invader welded them together in a common cause.”²¹ The Pashtuns have demonstrated this tendency repeatedly. However, they have also been famous for shifting their alliances after being militarily overpowered or thanks to political dealings.

The Pashtuns live by their own tribal code, *pashtunwali*, which is an unwritten set of values that govern routine life, as well as every category of dispute among individuals and among tribes. These include *melmestia* (hospitality to guests), *nanawati* (the right to asylum), *badal* (blood revenge), *tureh* (bravery) and *nang* (honor).²² Some of these contradict the tenets of Islam. For example, Islam places stress on *forgiveness* rather than *badal*, and offers an altogether different interpretation of *nang* and *nanawati*. Pashtunwali directs retribution for violations of family honor, and revenge is more than an obligation for an individual, a family, or a tribe. The traditional *Loya Jirgah* (National Grand Council), comprised of influential tribal, religious, and urban leaders, can represent a semblance of central authority, but it typically meets only in times of crisis.²³ While local Jirgahs have long assisted with the routine governance of villages, traditional Afghan government authority has remained an anomaly to most Afghans.

Islam has long been at the core of the ordinary Afghan’s life. However, Afghans’ interpretation of Islam reveals certain contradictions. Before the Soviet invasion, the Afghans were tolerant of other sects, religions, and modern lifestyles. However, the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Occupation and the ensuing civil war (1992–96) severely damaged such open mindedness and gave rise to political Islam.²⁴ According to Dupree,

²¹ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 25.

²² Ibid., 15–17.

²³ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, xii.

²⁴ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 82.

“the Islam practiced in Afghan villages, nomad camps, and most urban areas (the ninety to ninety-five percent non-literates) would be almost unrecognizable to a sophisticated Muslim scholar.”²⁵

What deserves mention is that while Islam and *pashtunwali* govern Pashtun daily life, these are so entrenched that they are taken for granted. Arguably, this is one reason the country has continued to remain in the grip of Islamist extremists and has the potential to export the same to neighboring Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs).

Throughout, one constant has been Afghan tribes’ willingness to fight foreigners, neighbors, and even their own countrymen. The Afghans—Pashtuns in particular—have become “almost genetically expert in guerrilla warfare after centuries of resisting all comers, and fighting amongst themselves when no comers were available.”²⁶ The British Indian armies invaded Afghanistan three times to prevent it from coming under Russian influence during the “Great Game” between 1839 and 1920, but failed to maintain a permanent presence each time.²⁷ Immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a former British officer wrote:

As one who has had considerable personal experience of engaging in military operations against the hill men of those regions, I know exactly what the Russian army is up against. I firmly believe that the Russians have bitten off a lot more than they can chew. Let them stew in their own juice, and go on wasting a lot of military effort to no purpose.²⁸

While many members of the western intelligentsia predicted that war in Afghanistan during the Soviet era would lead to a “Soviet Vietnam,” today it is widely believed that Afghanistan is actually reprising America’s Vietnam.²⁹ In March 2009, Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper expressed clearly that “foreign forces can’t

²⁵ Goodson, *Afghanistan’s Endless War*, 18.

²⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁷ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 18–20.

²⁸ Ibid., xi.

²⁹ Thomas H. Johnson and Chris Mason, “Refighting the Last War; Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template,” *Military Review*, November-December 2009, 14.
http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20091231_art004.pdf
(accessed January 12, 2010).

defeat the Afghan insurgency, as Afghanistan has historically remained in a constant state of insurgency. If we think that we are going to govern Afghanistan for Afghans, or over the long-term be responsible for day-to-day security in Afghanistan and see that country improves, we are mistaken.”³⁰ As Andrew J. Bacevich echoes, “fixing Afghanistan is not only unnecessary, it’s likely to prove impossible. Not for nothing has the place acquired the nickname, “Graveyard of Empires.”³¹

C. BACKGROUND TO THE “AFGHAN JIHAD”

The history of twentieth century Jihad is based on events that shaped the world in the post-WW-II period. The development of modern Islamic extremism can be traced to the creation of Israel. Extremism received a tremendous boost as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli wars, and finally *triumphed* after the defeat of the Soviets when Jihad was used as an instrument of state policy by the U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other supporting states. Thus, governments from the West and Muslim world alike are equally responsible for creating this Frankenstein. However, as with Frankenstein, failure to handle their creation in the post-Soviet period enabled it go wild.

Following the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the U.S. decided to use “proxy warfare” against the Soviets.³² The CIA and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan fully cooperated in supporting, funding, training, recruiting, and coordinating the “Mujahedeen” operations against the Soviets inside Afghanistan.³³ The U.S. committed \$4–5 billion between 1980 and 1992 to support the Mujahedeen, which was equally matched by Saudi Arabia.³⁴ The total aid provided by the U.S., Saudi Arabia,

³⁰ “Foreign Troops Can’t Defeat Afghan Insurgency: Harper,” *CBC News*, March 1, 2009. http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x5175419 (accessed December 9, 2009).

³¹ Andrew J. Bacevich, “The War We Can’t Win; Afghanistan and the Limits of American Power,” *Small Wars Journal*, August 5, 2009. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/08/the-war-we-cant-win/> (accessed December 17, 2009).

³² John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, 3rd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2002), xv.

³³ *Ibid.*, xiv.

³⁴ Rashid, *Taliban*, 18.

and other countries—mostly in the form of lethal weapons—amounted to over \$10 billion.³⁵ The approximate expenditure by the Soviets was \$5 billion per year (\$45 billion in total), and yet they lost.³⁶

The FATA in Pakistan provided an ideal location from which to launch the Mujahedeen against the Soviets inside Afghanistan. The U.S. regarded the possibility of mobilizing one billion Muslims against what President Reagan called the “Evil Empire” a “God-sent opportunity.”³⁷ During a reception at the White House, President Reagan is on record describing the Mujahedeen as the moral equivalents of the U.S. Founding Fathers thanks to their role against the Evil Empire.³⁸

In 1984, Osama Bin-Laden established himself as a patron of Jihad and founded the *Maktab al-Khidamat* (MAK or “Office of Services”) in the FATA, which later evolved into al-Qaeda.³⁹ What is important to note is that none of this happened in a vacuum as the CIA and ISI helped the Mujahedeen throughout.⁴⁰ Some analysts believe that Bin-Laden even received security training from the CIA.⁴¹ As President Musharraf has pointed out, the collaboration of the U.S., Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia in supporting the Mujahedeen achieved what Hitler and Napoleon failed to achieve: the defeat of Russia.⁴²

As the Mujahedeen struggle intensified, the U.S. sensed the Soviets were thinking of withdrawing from Afghanistan.⁴³ Disagreements arose between the CIA’s Near East division and the State Department over the future role of the U.S. in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. Despite a special U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that

³⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 18.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Eqbal Ahmad, “Terrorism: Theirs and Ours” In *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment: Readings & Interpretations*, 39-49. eds. Russell D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, Rev. and updated ed. (Guilford, Conn: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2004), 39.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

³⁹ Al Qaeda, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Qaeda (accessed December, 20, 2009).

⁴⁰ Pervez Musharraf, *In The Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 218.

⁴¹ “Al-Qaeda’s Origins and Links,” *BBC News*, Middle East, 20 July 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1670089.stm (accessed August 17, 2009).

⁴² Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 277.

⁴³ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin Books Inc. 2005), 171.

predicted the future Afghan government might be “actively hostile” towards the U.S., the U.S. government abandoned any political negotiations with the Mujahedeen—something, in retrospect, helped make the NIE correct.⁴⁴ Many anti-communist ideologues in the Reagan administration believed that the CIA’s pullback from Afghanistan would be tantamount to selling out the Afghan rebel cause. In their view, the U.S. goal should have been to ensure “Afghan self-determination” and a government chosen by the “freedom fighters.”⁴⁵

Regrettably, the immediate loss of interest in the region by the U.S. after the Soviet withdrawal can be deemed one major cause of the Jihadists’ triumph in post-Soviet Afghanistan and beyond, and has to be counted among the lapses that led to the 9/11 attacks. After these years one may also ask why Jihad was embraced then, but cursed now?

D. THE FATA CONNECTION

The FATA, inhabited primarily by tribal Pashtuns is located along the disputed western border (Durand Line) between Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Afghanistan, a territory covering approximately 27,500 square Kilometers (3.4 % of Pakistan’s land mass).⁴⁶ The border of the FATA with Afghanistan is 1360 kilometers long. The FATA is home to some 3.17 million Pashtun tribesmen (2.05 % of Pakistan’s population), as well as 1.5 million Afghan refugees.⁴⁷ The border region is inhospitable and inaccessible, with extremely rugged mountainous terrain. Heights range between 8,000 and 15,000 feet. The population of adjoining NWFP is 19.63 million (two-thirds of

⁴⁴ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 173.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁴⁶ Government of Pakistan. “FATA,” *Population Demographics*.
<http://www.fata.gov.pk/subpages/population.php> (accessed December 29, 2009).

⁴⁷ Shuja Nawaz, *FATA—A Most Dangerous Place*. Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), January 2009, 1.
http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/081218_nawaz_fata_web.pdf (accessed January 10, 2010).

whom are Pashtuns);⁴⁸ the total population of Pashtuns in Pakistan is 25 million (14.7 % of Pakistan's population)⁴⁹—almost double the Pashtun population in Afghanistan.

| Agency | Area (sq km) | Population | Population density (per sq km) | Annual growth rate (%) |
|---------|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| FATA | 27,220 | 3,176,331 | 117 | 2.19 |
| Bajaur | 1,290 | 595,227 | 461 | 4.33 |
| Khyber | 2,576 | 546,730 | 212 | 3.92 |
| Kurram | 3,380 | 448,310 | 133 | 2.50 |
| Mohmand | 2,296 | 334,453 | 146 | 4.28 |
| NWA | 4,707 | 361,246 | 77 | 2.46 |
| Orakzai | 1,538 | 225,441 | 147 | -2.69 |
| SWA | 6,620 | 429,841 | 65 | 1.95 |

Table 2. Area, population and annual growth rate in FATA.⁵⁰

According to Pakistan's constitution, responsibility for administering the FATA rests with the federal government through the Governor of the NWFP in his capacity as an agent of the President of Pakistan. The governor works through a Political Agent (PA) in each agency, who is selected by the federal government from a pool of civil service officers.

Today there are at least four major different security threats emanating from the FATA: foreign terrorists; Afghan Taliban; Pakistani Taliban; and sectarian groups.⁵¹ Another threat that has emerged is the criminal element that is exploiting the situation and committing crimes under the aegis of these major groups. Meanwhile Pakistan's own national security is at stake thanks to growing international concerns about the FATA and its role in injecting Islamist extremism and terrorism into Pakistan.

⁴⁸ NWFP Government in Pakistan. Population Welfare Department. *Demography*. <http://nwfp.gov.pk/population/Department/Demography.php> (accessed January 10, 2010).

⁴⁹ Nawaz, *FATA*, 2.

⁵⁰ Government of Pakistan. "FATA," *Population Demographic*.

⁵¹ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, August 2008, Report No. 36, 16. http://www.cfr.org/publication/16763/securing_pakistans_tribal_belt.html (accessed July 3, 2009).

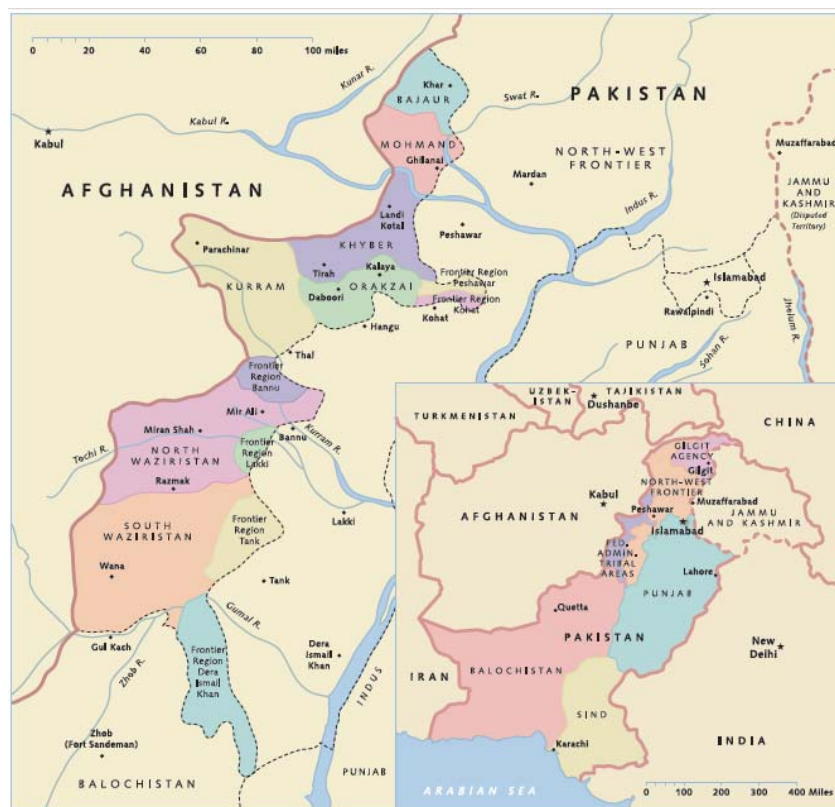


Figure 5. Map of the FATA.⁵²

It is significant that after sixty-three years of independence and global respect for the nation-state system, the Pakistan government has been unable to transform the FATA and its adjoining, ethnically similar Frontier Regions (FRs) of the NWFP into settled areas with secure borders. Administratively, the FATA is divided into seven political agencies. Immediately to the east of FATA are six contiguous FRs, also under the Governor's control, though for routine administration purposes these come under the provincial government of the NWFP (Figure 5).

The constitution of Pakistan recognizes the above status, yet its legislation does not apply in the FATA, which is administered via the system consolidated in 1901 under British colonial rule. A unique feature of the British Indian government's judicial system for the province, to include the tribal territory, was the Frontier Crime Regulations

⁵² Downloaded from Nawaz, *FATA*.

(FCR).⁵³ The FCR was enacted by the Punjab Government in 1872, and revised in 1887 and again in 1901, when the NWFP was created. These regulations authorized a PA to refer all criminal and civil cases to the Jirgah—in vogue even today in the FATA. Not only have successive governments in Pakistan been able to have neglect the FATA as a consequence of its special status, but the disputed Durand Line and the tribes' own resistance to change have resulted in the FATA's economic stagnation, lack of basic development, and descent into religious extremism, drug trafficking, gun running, and political alienation.

Compounding these problems is that the multilayered governing institutions in the FATA support what is at best a loose security apparatus. The lowest tier of security is provided by the *khasadars*, which function under the PA of each agency. These elements are drawn strictly from the local tribes, whose composition mirrors local demographics. Second, the Frontier Constabulary (FC), recruited from the settled areas and not the FATA, led by NWFP police officers. This force has the primary function in the areas adjacent to the FATA, the FRs. However, this force can be called up for law and order duties in the FATA. Third, the Frontier Corps NWFP (FC NWFP) remains the primary paramilitary force in the FATA, which is responsible for law and order and border control of the FATA. The FC NWFP comes under the Ministry of Interior. Due to this, it is distinct from the regular Pakistan army.

The FC NWFP troops are recruited and trained locally. However, they are led by officers from the Pakistan army commanded by a two star General. In case of war, the FC NWFP has a secondary role of supporting the Pakistan army. Historically, due to its isolation and inattention from the central government, the FC NWFP has lacked training and quality equipment. This negligence remained manageable until the FC was confronted with Pakistan's present threats. Not surprisingly, the FC NWFP troops have not fared well in numerous recent engagements with terrorists, and have suffered hundreds of casualties, particularly at the outset of the recent troubles.

As a component of the FATA, Waziristan deserves special attention because it is here that the British forces met with their greatest resistance—and where history is

⁵³ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 352–54.

repeating itself with the Pakistan army today (see Chapter IV). According to Watteville, “no empire could ever subject the tribes of Waziristan.”⁵⁴ The area continues to retain its original characteristics—the only differences being that those who were previously patrons during the Soviet era (Pakistanis and Americans) are now the victims of a ‘reverse’ Jihad. The British remained engaged in this tribal belt from 1839 till they left in 1947, but failed to bring these tribes under their total control. The British recorded 1,750 raids into Punjab from Waziristan between 1911 and 1941.⁵⁵ It is eerie to read the comments of the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in his official dispatch of 1 August 1920, referring to Waziristan operations as:

...of unparalleled hard fighting and severity. The enemy fought with a determination and courage which has rarely, if ever, been met with by our troops in similar operations. The character of the terrain, combined with trying and arduous climatic conditions, alone presented difficulties before which the most hardened troops might well have hesitated.⁵⁶

E. THE IMPACT OF DURAND LINE

The demarcation of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been problematic, especially since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. To understand the background of the Durand Line requires a brief review of Britain’s involvement in Afghanistan in the early nineteenth century during the Great Game. After Russian successes against the Ottomans and Persians in the late 1820s, the British government in England began to worry about the northern frontier of India.⁵⁷ The British feared that Russian consolidation along the Hindu Kush would grant it dominance over Central Asian trade and enable it to threaten invasion and incite rebellion in the sub-continent against the British.⁵⁸ Thus, began the British involvement with the NWFP, its tribal belt, and Afghanistan, leading to unending wars.

⁵⁴ H. de Watteville, *Waziristan, 1919-20* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd, 1925), 390–91.

⁵⁵ Noor Ul Haq, Rashid Ahmad Khan and Maqsood Ul Hassan, “Federally Administered Areas of Pakistan,” *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, March 2005. <http://ipripak.org/papers/federally.shtml> (accessed December 20, 2009).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁷ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

In the aftermath of the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878–79), the British wanted the North West Frontier demarcated as a defensive measure against the Russians. After considerable deliberation, the military and civilian leadership decided to place the borders where they are today, as this allowed Britain to retain control of the strategic passes connecting India with Afghanistan. Accordingly, in 1893, Sir Mortimer Durand concluded an agreement with Amir Abdul Rehman of Afghanistan, fixing the present boundary line.⁵⁹ This dividing line came to be known as the Durand Line.

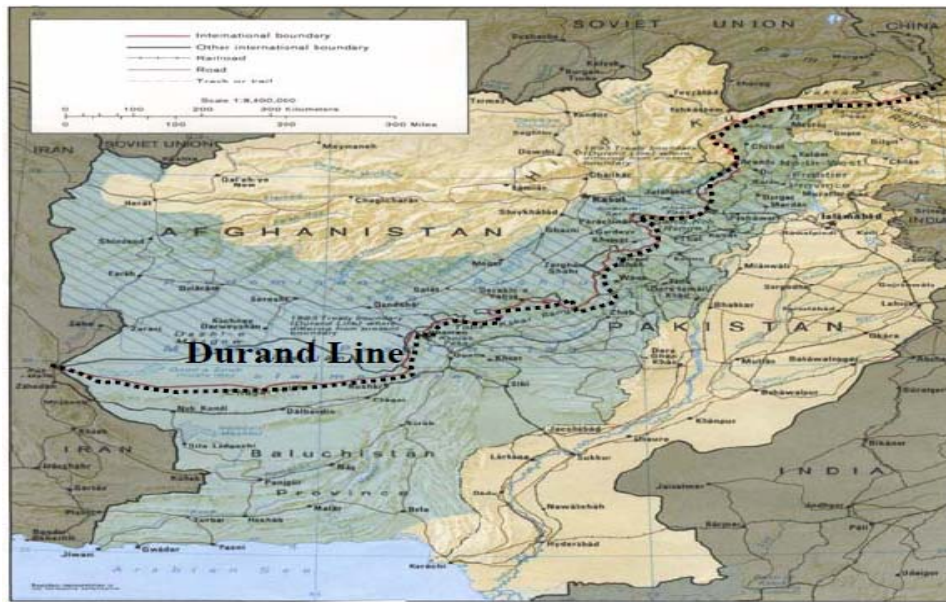


Figure 6. The Durand Line and Afghanistan’s claim up to the western bank of the Indus River in Pakistan.⁶⁰

The unfortunate aspect of this line is that it split the Pashtuns. According to Roberts, “whether viewed from the perspective of regional economies, ethnography, or basic geography, the line seems illogical,”⁶¹ thus, making it virtually impossible to administer effectively on either side. Nevertheless, the Durand Line also represents a classic example of the British policy of “divide and rule.” According to a clause in the agreement:

⁵⁹ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 29.

⁶⁰ Downloaded from Khawar Hussain, “Pakistan’s Afghan Policy,” M.A. thesis, NPS, June 2005, 14.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and His Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.⁶²

The year 1947 marked a turning point in the history of the tribal areas as a new and independent state of Pakistan replaced the British colonialists. Unfortunately, immediately after partition in 1947, Afghanistan announced the abrogation of all treaties with British India and challenged Pakistan's legitimacy.⁶³ Afghanistan was the only country to challenge the creation of Pakistan in the UN. This hostility continues even today as Afghanistan has not recognized the Durand Line and claims territory inside Pakistan, up to the western bank of the Indus River—in other words over 50% of Pakistan's territory.

Overlaid with the claim on territory is the issue of Pashtunistan. According to some elite Afghans, Pashtuns are one nation and need to be united under Afghanistan, not Pakistan. Indeed, President Daud of Afghanistan once stated that the “British did a wrong many years ago, and we have been fighting to rectify it. Until that is done, the struggle will continue.”⁶⁴ Consequently, the Durand line remains little more than a disputed line on the map, having no significance on the ground. Worse, a clause in the Durand agreement, referring to what are known as “easement rights,” allows the Pashtun tribes cross-border transit for social and commercial activities—a practice much in vogue even today.⁶⁵ This one agreement between both countries is a major hurdle in regulating the border security, which is being exploited by the terrorists on either side.

F. CONCLUSION

From start to finish, American leaders remained catastrophically ignorant of Vietnamese history, culture, values, motives and abilities. Misperceiving both its enemy and its ally, and imprisoned in the myopic conviction that sheer military force could somehow overcome adverse

⁶² Caroe, *The Pathans*, 463.

⁶³ Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*, 120.

⁶⁴ Azmat Hayat Khan, *The Durand Line; its Geo-Strategic Importance* (Peshawar: University of Peshawar Press, 2000), 185.

⁶⁵ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 265.

circumstances, Washington stumbled from one failure to the next in the continuing delusion that success was always just ahead.⁶⁶—Arnold Isaacs.

In order to find a respectable solution to the conflict, it is exceedingly important for coalition forces to first understand Afghanistan and the region as a whole or else, unfortunately, their fate may not be different from that of previous invaders of Afghanistan. The U.S. must not repeat the mistakes it committed in Vietnam and learn from the mistakes committed by the Soviets in Afghanistan. By abandoning Afghanistan earlier in the post-Soviet withdrawal period, the U.S. allowed Afghanistan to become a safe haven for extremists and terrorists—a mistake, the U.S. cannot afford to repeat.

For Pakistan's part, meanwhile, there is much that needs to be done to overcome growing domestic extremism. In an age when the sovereignty of a nation state lies in well-defined boundaries, good governance, and effective law and order, a nation can ill afford its territories to remain under-governed or be used as safe havens for terrorism and crime. In view of the FATA's history and peculiar tribal character, bringing normalcy to the FATA will be a long haul with no "quick fix" solutions. For more than sixty years, the FATA has suffered from the central government's acts of deliberate omission. Having relegated the tribes to neglect and exploited for Jihad, it is about time Pakistan now rectify its past mistakes by taking firm and visible measures that demonstrates the country's seriousness about reforming governance in these under-governed areas. As an urgent step, the FATA must be integrated into mainland Pakistan by merging it into NWFP, opening it to political discourse, and extending the writ of Pakistan's constitution into the FATA. These steps will automatically mitigate the existence of safe havens in the FATA. Next, Pakistan must reform its education system which will help counter extremist ideologies spreading from unregulated madrassas. The madrassas must be placed under strict state control, and monitoring systems established, to deny any one of them being used for indoctrinating Jihad.

Since Partition in 1947, Pak-Afghan relations have been bumpy. The politics of Pashtun ethnicity in Afghanistan and nationalism transcend the two countries mutual border, which are serious threats to the integrity of Pakistan. Thousands of people with virtually

⁶⁶ Johnson and Mason, "Refighting the Last War."

identical ethnic backgrounds cross the border at over 300 frequented and unfrequented border crossings each day, legally permitted by the easement rights. There is no way to distinguish among terrorists, refugees, and local tribal people crossing the border. This is made still more difficult by the lack of proper border security mechanisms, particularly on the Afghan side. Thus, the status-quo on the border remains no kind of status quo, but a constant destabilizing factor for both states. Previously, the Soviet Union and India have exploited the ethnic cleavages and vulnerability of the border for their own geopolitical agenda. This is yet another reason why it is important for the international community to come together and work in unison with Pakistan and Afghanistan to settle the Durand Line issue once and for all. Not only would such a settlement have a long-term stabilizing impact regionally, but it would deny the use of these under-governed spaces to terrorists who represent a menace to the world.

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III. THE NATURE OF INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

Over the last few decades, regular armed forces—including some of the largest and best—have repeatedly failed in numerous low-intensity conflicts where they seemed to hold all the cards. This should have caused politicians, the military, and their academic advisors to take a profound new look at the nature of war in our time; however, by and large no such attempt at reevaluation was made.

—Martin Van Creveld⁶⁷

A. INTRODUCTION

An insurgency is an internal conflict, which can be easily exploited by external actors. As per McCormick, “An insurgency is primarily a struggle for power (over a political space) between a state (or an occupying power) and one or more popularly based challengers.”⁶⁸ The aim of insurgents is to seize power from the existing authority or split the country. History demonstrates that once the social structure in a country or a society crumbles, the power vacuum created will be filled by non-state actors, which often leads to a subsequent revolt.

Broadly, insurgencies can be categorized into two major forms: national and liberation insurgencies.⁶⁹ In the case of a national insurgency, the competitors are a legitimate government and the insurgent. In the case of liberation insurgencies, the insurgents are pitted against a government that is perceived to be a puppet of a foreign occupation force. The insurgents’ objective in the second case is to liberate their nation from foreign occupation and dislodge the regime that is furthering the occupier’s cause.

To counter liberation insurgency is comparatively difficult. Not even the most determined information campaign can compensate for the negatives associated with the outsider status of a foreign occupation force. For the very same reason, smart insurgents

⁶⁷ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 222.

⁶⁸ Gordon H. McCormick, Steven B. Horton and Lauren A. Harrison, “Things Fall Apart: the Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2007), 322.

⁶⁹ Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004, 2. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub586.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2009).

prefer to give their movement the appearance of a liberation struggle to maximize popular support and also achieve greater unity within their organization or networks (something we have seen with Mao's revolution, the Mujahedeen struggle against the Soviets, and the current Taliban resistance in Afghanistan).

Neither the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan nor the Afghan government can hope to win without having a clear understanding of the nature of the insurgency that has confronted them since 2002. Having gone through a brief history of Afghanistan and the FATA in Chapter II, this chapter will primarily concentrate on what makes the nature of insurgency in Afghanistan unique.

B. WHY THE INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN IS PECULIAR

Unlike other wars, Afghan wars become serious only when they are over; in British times at least they were apt to produce an after-crop of tribal unrest [and] ... constant intrigue among the border tribes.⁷⁰

Two facts are worth remarking. First, the U.S. and NATO have not been able to achieve their objectives against the Taliban despite having a remarkable edge in resources and technology. Reliance on "kinetics" alone has failed to crush the insurgency that suggests that there must be something different about the local people that they are willing to struggle on against such odds, which is one reason to learn more about them. Second, COIN is always supposed to be more about *people* and less about kinetics. The kinetics achieved what was initially intended—removal of the Taliban—long ago. Thereafter, the battle to win meant winning over the people.

Afghanistan possesses all the necessary prerequisites for an ideal insurgency as outlined by David Galula, a famous French COIN expert. These are: a perfect cause, ideal geographic conditions, the weakness of the state, and foreign support.⁷¹ The existence of ideal conditions and a few additional factors such as persistent regional disputes, the geostrategic significance of the region due to oil and gas in Central Asia, a deficit of trust as

⁷⁰ Caroe, *The Pathans*, cited by David Kilcullen in, *The Accidental Guerilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

⁷¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (West Port: Praeger Security International, 1964), 11–28.

well as differences among the allies waging war in Afghanistan, and the U.S.'s recent image in the world makes the insurgency in Afghanistan peculiar and extremely complex.

1. A Perfect Cause

The most important cause for insurgents' purposes is one that attracts the largest number of supporters and repels the minimum number of opponents.⁷² Because liberating Afghanistan from foreign occupation is in line with Afghan traditions, it is an ideal 'just cause.' Although the goals and objectives of the Taliban and al-Qaeda are different, treating both as one has unified them against ISAF. Unlike al-Qaeda, which has a global agenda, the Taliban have so far not demonstrated such ambitions and are resisting foreign occupation in true Afghan spirit. While ISAF and the Afghan government remain indifferent to ground truths, the dominant factor in the insurgency and to some extent the civil war is "Pashtun nationalism." The Taliban are portraying themselves as defenders of the Pashtun cause, defenders who are engaged in a just struggle to oust the foreigners, and defenders bent on reviving Pashtun rule and lost honor in Kabul. It is important to remember: the Pashtuns had ruled Afghanistan for over 300 years until they were ousted by minority ethnic groups with foreign support.⁷³

The Taliban represent a relatively homogenous movement compared to the seven-party alliance of the Mujahedeen that was forged to fight the Soviets in the 1980s. The Taliban are pre-eminently Pashtun (the single largest ethnic group in Afghanistan). Mullah Omar is the unchallenged leader of the Islamist movement—at the moment there is hardly an alternative who could rise and compete for the Taliban leadership. In order to prove his *religious* legitimacy, Mullah Omar wore the holy cloak (no evidence of its authenticity) of Prophet Muhammad in 1996 in a public gathering after which the public declared him the *Amir-ul-Momineen* (leader of the faithful).⁷⁴ The rise of the movement was as a result of strife between the warlords and the vacuum created in the war-torn population in the post-Soviet period, which was filled by the madrassa-educated Taliban.

⁷² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 13.

⁷³ Rashid, *Taliban*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

The theological basis of the Taliban movement continues to provide the present struggle the legitimacy of holy Jihad against foreign occupation. In reality, the Taliban movement can be best described as a blend of Pashtun alienation (giving impetus to nationalism), struggle against the American-backed Karzai regime, and a classic liberation insurgency to oust the foreign occupation from the Afghan land. This is where the goals of al-Qaeda coincide with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which is effectively using the Taliban to fight the foreigners by exploiting their *Pashtunwali* code and unorthodox Islamic beliefs.

2. Geographic Conditions

The role of geography is overriding in any Unconventional War. Afghanistan is a land-locked country with porous borders. The physical characteristics of a country play a significant role in insurgent conflicts and shape the strategy they adopt. Bard O'Neill explains the significance of the terrain in the Malayan insurgency as follows:

It has been estimated that approximately 5,000 Communist partisans in Malaya were being hunted by 230,000 regular soldiers and police, but the jungle is the equalizer. In this jungle it took 1,000 man-hours for each partisan killed.⁷⁵



Figure 7. Physical map elevation of Afghanistan.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C: Potomac Books Inc, 2005), 73.

⁷⁶ Downloaded from Shahid A. Afsar and Christopher A. Samples, "The Evolution of The Taliban," M.S. thesis, NPS, June 2008, 24.

Small and developed countries are unsuitable for typical guerrilla warfare. Even if terrain is feasible for guerrilla warfare, the effect may be limited in a small state. In contrast, a vast and rugged terrain will make a state's task of extending its authority into those areas exceedingly cumbersome. The Soviets were confronted with this predicament during their occupation of Afghanistan; the U.S. is now facing the same situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan extends over 250,000 square miles, with 70% of its territory covered by rugged and high mountain ranges. Only 12% of Afghanistan's land is arable.⁷⁷ Ground movement is mostly restricted to the valleys, making it vulnerable to ambushes.

Afghanistan is mainly dependent upon its neighbors for access to the outside world. The Afghan government and ISAF cannot sustain their war effort against the insurgents without cooperative neighbors, particularly Pakistan. This source of vulnerability for the Afghan government and ISAF limits their complete freedom of operations in Afghanistan. Eighty percent of ISAF cargo and forty percent of fuel requirements pass through Pakistan.⁷⁸ Uzbekistan has already declined any further support to the U.S.⁷⁹ And Russia has the ability to stop overflights to Afghanistan via Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The only other land route is via Iran through the Chahbahar port on the Arabian Sea. However, given the nature of U.S.-Iran relations, this is a dead option.

3. Weakness of the State

An insurgency is a competition between insurgents and government for control over the civilian population, "which provides the sea in which the insurgent swims."⁸⁰ There is no way that an insurgency evolves without there being weaknesses or vulnerabilities in the state. Generally, there are four instruments of control available to the state against an insurgency: the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, the

⁷⁷ Khan, "History of Afghanistan."

⁷⁸ Nawaz, *FATA*, 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Foreword by John A. Nagal in Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, viii.

police, and the armed forces.⁸¹ Thanks to American patronage, the Karzai government possesses these instruments in theory. But in reality, all are dysfunctional at best. The government's performance has been dismal since its inception, and a source of embarrassment for the U.S., its mentor.

ISAF's inability to build up the indigenous capacity of the Afghan government to take over, or at least lead security operations against the insurgents and protect its own population, has proved the biggest weakness of the Karzai government. Total police forces recruited so far have reached a figure of over 80,000. However, less than 30 percent of this force is capable of performing independently.⁸² General Stanley McChrystal wants to double Afghan National Police (ANP) strength by the end of 2010 to demonstrate progress in building indigenous Afghan security capabilities.⁸³ However, thus far the ANP's poor discipline and conduct have contributed to the insurgents' cause. The ANP's illegal activities include heinous crimes such as narcotics trafficking, bribery, smuggling, extortion, looting, and extra-judicial killings.⁸⁴

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is comparatively better than the ANP. ANA training remains the responsibility of the U.S., which initially trained the ANA as an auxiliary force rather than as a force which could take over security responsibilities.⁸⁵ The ANA is mentored by U.S., British, and Canadian officers down to the company level.⁸⁶ The employment of the ANA is "mutually" approved by ISAF and the Afghan government. However, the Afghan government has little control over its forces. The

⁸¹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

⁸² Afghanistan Index, *Brookings*, October 30, 2009. <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index20091030.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2009).

⁸³ Gordon Adams, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Graveyard for the U.S. Foreign Policy Planning," *Bulletin of the Atomic Sciences*. October 8, 2009. <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/columnists/gordon-adams/afghanistan-and-pakistan-the-graveyard-us-foreign-policy-plannin> (accessed January 20, 2010).

⁸⁴ Anotnio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2008), 175.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 181–182.

ANA has five Corps with over 90,000 troops.⁸⁷ General McChrystal wants this strength to grow to 134,000 by the end of 2010 in order to further strengthen the indigenous Afghan security apparatus.⁸⁸

After eight years, the ANA is not prepared to assume its responsibilities due to a lack of resources and organizational limitations—less than 30 percent of the ANA is said to be capable of an independent task.⁸⁹ To some, the ANA has improved. They cite as evidence the fact that a majority of the 6,000 troops that participated in “Operation Moshtarak” (Together)—launched in February 2010 in Marja (Helmand)—reportedly belonged to the ANA.⁹⁰ However, despite early claims of success by the U.S., the Taliban have “re-seized the control and the momentum in a lot of ways” in Marja.⁹¹ Surprisingly, this has happened in the presence of U.S. Marines and after heavy monetary inducements to the locals.

Confronted with these limitations, the U.S. has agreed with the Karzai government to bring back its ex-foes from the Soviet era to fill higher ranks in the army and the Ministry of Defense.⁹² The other major problem confronting the ANA is its ethnic mix. The Pashtuns, comprising 42% of the population in Afghanistan, fill only 32% of the officer slots as compared to 56% for Tajiks.⁹³ This is said to be one reason the recruitment of Pashtuns into the ANA has dropped to only 3%.⁹⁴

The other weakness of the Karzai regime is its lack of legitimacy. Afghan history reveals that legitimacy to rule comes from two sources: “*dynastic* (Monarchies and tribal

⁸⁷ Afghan Index, October 30, 2009.

⁸⁸ Adams, “Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

⁸⁹ Afghan Index, October 30, 2009.

⁹⁰ C.J Chivers, “Coalition Troops Storm Taliban Haven,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2010.

⁹¹ Richard Opel, “Hurting US Efforts to Win, Taliban Disrupt Pay,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2010.

⁹² Yaroslav Trofimov, “U.S. Enlists Ex-Foes for Afghan Army,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2010. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704533204575047352811767576.html> (accessed February 10, 2010).

⁹³ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 187.

⁹⁴ Ahmed Rashid, “A Deal with the Taliban?” *New York Times Review of Books*, Vol 57, No. 3, February 25, 2010. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/23630> (accessed February 28, 2010).

patriarchies) and *religious* or sometimes both.”⁹⁵ Mullah Omar tried to legitimize his movement, and then the Taliban rule through the later source. There is no precedent in Afghanistan for democracy as a source of legitimacy for a ruler. In essence, “the Karzai government is illegitimate *because* it is elected.”⁹⁶ As Winston Churchill pointed out, “democracy can easily become another way of electing bad or ineffective governments.”⁹⁷ Tellingly, the world treated Afghanistan’s August 2009 elections as meeting the standard for legitimacy. It is interesting to read an assessment like the following by the Center for Strategic and International Studies about the legitimacy of these elections:

The election already is highly illegitimate and rigged, and will remain so regardless of the honesty of the voting process and the actual count. Karzai has spent months trying to exploit traditional ties and allegiances by buying bloc votes from ex-warlords, local leaders, and power brokers.⁹⁸

4. Foreign Support

According to Galula, “no outside support is absolutely necessary at the start of an insurgency, although it obviously helps when available.”⁹⁹ Outside support can only materialize when an indigenous revolution or insurgency has a well-organized local support system. The insurgents can only convert the inputs received from endogenous and exogenous sources (e.g., people, food, money, material, information etc.) if they have an efficient conversion mechanism (core organization) for achieving their desired outputs (activities).¹⁰⁰ If the local insurgent system is effective, outside support can be a force multiplier, but not *the* only source of the system’s strength.

⁹⁵ Johnson and Mason, “Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template.”

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman, “Legitimacy and the Afghan Elections,” *CSIS*, August 18, 2009, <http://csis.org/publication/legitimacy-and-afghan-election>, (accessed December 20, 2009).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., “Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts,” *RAND*, R-462-ARPA, (February 1970), 35.

The “Afghan insurgency” is led by the Taliban as well as Pashtun nationalists who are located in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda collaborators find support in the neighboring FATA, Iran, Central Asia, Far Eastern Muslim countries, and the Middle East. But we also should not forget that the anti-Taliban groups (NA and the warlords) also draw support from the broader region. The traditional norm of meddling neighbors persists. The wide, porous, uncontrolled borders, and ‘interested’ neighbors create ideal opportunities for antagonists from throughout the region to use the situation to advantage.

According to David Kilcullen, “despite its importance as a terrorist safe haven, Pakistan is *a* problem, not *the* problem...Thus “fixing” Pakistan would help, but not solve the Afghan problem. The key to the Afghan insurgency lies in Afghanistan, not Pakistan.”¹⁰¹ In General McChrystal’s assessment, “While the existence of safe heavens in Pakistan does not guarantee ISAF failure, Afghanistan does require Pakistan’s cooperation and action against violent militancy, particularly against those groups active in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the insurgency in Afghanistan is *predominantly* Afghan.”¹⁰² The ability of the Taliban to conduct deep and sustained operations, with a certain degree of population support, indicates that support from the FATA is not the *mainstay* of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are both receiving funds from Arab countries, whereas the FATA only provides limited sanctuary, particularly since Pakistan’s recent army operations there (see Chapter IV). Significantly, foreign support to the Taliban is not as impressive as was the case with the Mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation. Instead, the chief problem is that the Karzai regime is far weaker than was the Communist regime in Kabul during the Soviet occupation.

5. Regional Disputes

Stanley Wolpert, in his book *Shameful Flight*, has eloquently explained why South Asia is plagued with territorial and border disputes: the British left all sorts of bitter legacies when they divested themselves of their colonies. According to T.V. Paul,

¹⁰¹ Kilcullen, *Accidental Guerilla*, 53.

¹⁰² Headquarters ISAF (Kabul). *COMISAF’S INITIAL ASSESSMENT*. August 30, 2009. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Primary-Resources/Detail/?ots591=69F57A17-24D2-527C-4F3B-B63B07201CA1&lng=en&id=106243> (accessed December 2, 2009).

“enduring rivalries” are defined as “conflicts between two or more states that last more than two decades with several militarized inter-state disputes punctuating the relationship in between.”¹⁰³ The Indo-Pak rivalry, primarily over Kashmir, is not only enduring, but asymmetric. That is what makes it unique. However, the asymmetric advantage India enjoys thanks to its sheer size, is countered by Pakistan through a balanced strategy that privileges tactics, alliances with the U.S. and China, credible deterrence in conventional and nuclear weapons,¹⁰⁴ and use of its geo-strategic position vis-a-vis Afghanistan. After the 1962 Indo-China war, India’s rivalry with China can also be considered an enduring rivalry. This factor adds to the complex politics and security in the region as India attempts to compete with China, a superpower in being and a reliable partner of Pakistan.

The recent statement by the Indian army chief, General Deepak Kapoor, in which he asserted that India is preparing for a two front war with Pakistan and China, defines the nature of threats in the region due to these rivalries.¹⁰⁵ The renewed escalation in tensions between China and India over the state of Arunchal Pardesh, currently under Indian control, helps explain General Kapoor’s statement. At the same time, it vindicates Pakistan’s view of India and the threat it poses, something the U.S. wants Pakistan to alter so that it will remove forces from its border with India and reinforce its (non) border with Afghanistan. What few seem to recognize is that Pakistan exists between a rock and a hard place given the enduring rivalry with India on the East and its turbulent border with Afghanistan in the West.

Pakistan has had genuine security interests in Afghanistan and in the formation of its government, at least dating back to the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Once President Zia-Ul-Haq (a general who ruled Pakistan for 11 years) learnt that the U.S. was no longer interested in Afghanistan, his assessment defined Pakistan’s Afghan policy, which became little different from what it had been under the British Viceroy in India, or what it is today:

¹⁰³ T.V. Paul and others, eds., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3–4.

¹⁰⁴ Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict*, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ayesha Siddiqi, “India’s Challenge,” *Dawn*, January 8, 2010.

We have earned the right to have [in Kabul] a power which is very friendly towards us. We have taken serious risks as a front-line state, and we will not permit a return to the prewar situation, marked by a large Indian and Soviet influence and Afghan claims on our own country.¹⁰⁶

The Afghan government, meanwhile, blames Pakistan for the existence of “safe havens” used by the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the FATA, as well as support to the bloody Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan. The discord between the two neighbors runs deep, as we saw in Chapter II. For its part, Pakistan blames Afghanistan for its involvement in terrorism and militancy in Baluchistan and the FATA, in sync with India.¹⁰⁷ Pakistan also sees the U.S. supporting a NA-dominated government in Afghanistan. In fact from a Pakistani perspective, it appears the U.S. supports all of Pakistan’s regional rivals. This renders the situation a strategic disaster for Pakistan.¹⁰⁸ According to Ahmed Rashid, “Kabul had suddenly become the new Kashmir—the new battleground for the India-Pakistan rivalry.”¹⁰⁹ What drives this analogy home is that India, for its part, accuses Pakistan of supporting the insurgency in the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) and for terrorist acts in India, such as those in Mumbai in 2008.

6. Trust Deficit and Differences Among Allies

There is a visible lack of trust among the allies in Afghanistan for a host of reasons. Pakistan does not trust the present NA dominated Afghan government, which has been historically anti-Pakistan and pro-India. The trust deficit in Pakistan-U.S. relations—a fact admitted by both sides—is another major challenge for bilateral relations and the war in Afghanistan.

a. Pakistani Mistrust

According to Secretary Clinton’s statement during her testimony to the U.S. Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee on December 3, 2009, “there is great deal of

¹⁰⁶ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Irfan Ghauri, “Concrete Evidence of Indian Role in South Waziristan Found,” *The Daily Times*, November 03, 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, (Viking: Penguin Group, 2008), 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

mistrust between the U.S. and Pakistan because the Pakistanis believe that the Americans betrayed and abandoned them in the eighties [sic] after Washington walked away when the Russians withdrew from the region.”¹¹⁰ The Pakistani mistrust of U.S. alliance is rooted in the fact that only it was left in the cold to fend off the after-math, the U.S abandoned and slammed sanctions against Pakistan for pursuing its nuclear weapons program in 1990. Pakistanis expected reward for their pivotal contribution in the Soviet defeat, and later disintegration, and not punishment, while its nemesis India enjoyed the fruits of the end of Cold War.

The Pressler Act regularized billions of dollars in aid by the U.S. to Pakistan during the Afghan Jihad.¹¹¹ However, the same act was responsible for not only freezing the aid but implementing sanctions against Pakistan after the U.S. got what it wanted in 1989. Pakistan now fears a repeat U.S. abandonment once it is over with Afghanistan, despite recent approval of the Kerry-Lugar Act, sanctioning \$7.5 billion in civilian aid to Pakistan over the next five years. To some, this seems a bit reminiscent of Henry Kissinger’s famous line, “In this world it is often dangerous to be an enemy of the U.S., but to be a friend is fatal.”¹¹²

In Pakistan’s eyes, the U.S.-India “strategic” nuclear deal similarly reflects U.S. bias towards India and the role the U.S. wants India to play in the region, despite Pakistan’s pivotal role in the Afghanistan war. Pakistan maintains that India is *the* threat, and is behind militancy in Baluchistan and the FATA through its consulates in eastern Afghanistan.¹¹³ Pakistan first brought up this issue officially in July 2003 with the Afghan and U.S. governments, accusing Indian consulates of having “less to do with humanitarian aid and more to do with India’s top-secret intelligence agency, Research

¹¹⁰ Sami Abraham, “U.S., Pakistan Differ on Drone Strikes in FATA,” *The News*, December 4, 2009.

¹¹¹ Between 1982 and 1990 Pakistan received \$4 billion U.S. aid to enhance its security in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which threatened Pakistan as well. According to the Pressler Act, this aid could only be granted to Pakistan after the U.S. President Certified that Pakistan was not perusing its nuclear weapons program before every annual renewal of the grant.

¹¹² Patrick J. Buchanan, “U.S. Ready to Dump Pakistani Allies?” *BNET*, November 10, 2009. <http://www.defence.pk/forums/strategic-geopolitical-issues/38594-us-ready-dump-pakistani-allies.html> (accessed February 4, 2010).

¹¹³ Sami Abraham, “U.S. Took up Pak Concerns on Baluchistan with India: Mullen,” *The News*, December 10, 2009.

and Analysis Wing (RAW).”¹¹⁴ Pakistan pointed to RAW-backed “terrorist training camps” at the Afghan military base of Qushila Jadid, north of Kabul, near Gereshk in southern Helmand Province, in the Panjsher valley, and at Kahak and Hassan Killies in western Nimruz Province.¹¹⁵ Afghanistan creates a sort of Prisoner’s Dilemma for Pakistan and India:

| India | | Pakistan | |
|-------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Do Not Exert | Exert |
| | Do Not Exert | Neutral Afghanistan | Pro-Pakistan Afghanistan |
| | Exert | Pro-India Afghanistan | Proxy Warfare |

Table 3. Afghanistan’s Prisoner’s Dilemma.

Historically, India not only has supported every government in Kabul, with the exception of the Taliban, but it had previously welcomed, armed, and equipped Baluch insurgents, especially after the 1971 Indo-Pak war.¹¹⁶ Under these circumstances, when the U.S. is cozying up to India, Pakistan has reasons to doubt U.S. intentions, especially in the light of rocky relations in the past. In a recent statement the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yousaf Raza Gillani, was explicit on US-Pakistan relations, “We will not accept any discriminatory attitude towards Pakistan as on one hand civilian nuclear technology is being offered to India and, on the other, restrictions are being imposed on us. This is unacceptable.”¹¹⁷ Regrettably, the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal “ended up as an agreement by the 45 member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to exempt India from non-proliferation rules that are supposed to remain applicable to all other

¹¹⁴ Frederic Grare, *Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations in the Post 9/11 Era*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Papers, South Asia Project, No. 72. October 2006, 12.
<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18740> (accessed June 1, 2009).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Grare, *Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Asim Yasin, “PM links US success to Pakistan’s support,” *The News*, January 15, 2010.

states.”¹¹⁸ From the Pakistani perspective, this represents a dangerous move by the U.S. Not only will this deal disturb *strategic stability*, but it will give added impetus to the arms race in this already volatile region, both in terms of conventional and nuclear weapons. As George Perkovich has written of the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal:

If states and attentive populations feel that this deal began because the U.S. devalued treaties and rules and wanted to build favor with its new friend India—in part to balance the power of its competitor, China, and in part to enrich U.S. companies—and other states went along with it because India is a big market, then the core principles of fairness necessary to sustain a rule-based system are undermined.¹¹⁹

b. U.S. Skepticism

For its part, the U.S. distrusts Pakistan on three counts: Pakistan’s alleged support to militant groups, nuclear proliferation, and safety of its nuclear arsenal. Secretary Clinton, during her visit to Pakistan in November 2009, asserted that the leadership of the Afghan Taliban and of al-Qaeda are in Pakistan and “I find it hard to believe that nobody in your government knows where they are and couldn’t get them if they really wanted to.”¹²⁰ Obviously, these allegations have been denied at every tier of civilian and military leadership in Pakistan. Pakistan continues to ask the U.S. to provide, or at least share, credible and “actionable intelligence” with Pakistan to substantiate the U.S. claims, which it has not done so far.¹²¹

Recently, the Pakistani Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, made it clear “it is a wrong allegation against Pakistan that it has indulged in a double game,” further adding that “the casualties of NATO and allied forces in the war on terror were 1,582 during eight years while in *one year alone*, 2,273 officers and Jawans [soldiers] of Pakistan army were killed [including a three star, one two-star and

¹¹⁸ George Perkovich, “Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 139, No.1 Winter 2010. <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=24674> (accessed February 25, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Masooda Bano, “The Taliban and Al-Qaeda; Dissenting Note,” *The News*, November 13, 2009.

¹²¹ Asim Yasin, “NRO Ministers to Decide their Own Fate: Gillani,” *The News*, December 5, 2009.

six one-star generals]; and 6,512 were injured.¹²² These casualties include 73 Pakistani intelligence agents. The recent arrests of Mullah Omar's second-in-command, Mullah Baradar, and a few other senior Taliban leaders from Pakistan in joint ISI-CIA operations, speak volumes about Pakistan's cooperation in trying to root out the Afghan Taliban.

Expressions of distrust from U.S. leaders, despite repeated assurances by top Pakistani leaders, upset the Pakistani people and their armed forces, whose sacrifices in combating terrorism are second to none in the world. According to some U.S. think tanks, Pakistan has maintained an ambivalent position regarding the Afghan Taliban, based on two suppositions: One, the U.S. will exit the region yet again after killing or capturing key al-Qaeda leaders, and two, the Pashtun Taliban would return to power in Kabul after the U.S. exits.¹²³ The presumption is that since Pakistan cannot afford to have two hostile borders, it is in Pakistan's national interests to have a neutral or a pro-Pakistan Pashtun-dominated government in Afghanistan.

Regarding nuclear proliferation, Pakistan maintains that the principle architect of proliferation, Dr. AQ Khan, has been removed from the scene and remains in protective custody. From the Pakistani perspective, this is a settled issue as Pakistan has evolved stringent nuclear security and non-proliferation measures to avoid any recurrence of this problem in the future. However, Pakistanis believe that the U.S. was never comfortable with its nuclear program from its inception, which then became the major reason for estranged relations. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President Musharraf expressed his fears in the following way:

The security of our strategic assets would have been jeopardized. It is no secret that the U.S. has never been comfortable with Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons, and America undoubtedly would have taken the

¹²² "Pakistan Cannot Ignore Aggressive Indian Strategy, Says Kayani," *The News*, February 4, 2010.

¹²³ Nawaz, *FATA*, 11.

opportunity to destroy such weapons. And India, needless to say, would have loved to assist the U.S. to the hilt.¹²⁴

Although, the nuclear issue is not directly related to the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, certain analysts in the West and India fear that Pakistan's nuclear weapons may fall into the hands of terrorists (Taliban or al-Qaeda) thanks to the unstable situation in the country. These analysts, having vested interests, paint unrealistic and dangerous scenarios with regard to the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, which distract the world's attention from the significant contribution made by Pakistan in the fight against terrorists in the FATA, as well as through its vital cooperation with NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan. They forget to explain how a few thousand extremists (at the most 10,000) could, having no sympathy of the masses, prevail upon a moderate nation of 170 million Pakistanis that include over half a million members of professional, disciplined, and patriotic armed forces.

c. Differences Among NATO

After all these years, ISAF's goals and objectives remain murky, creating anxiety and frustration among NATO members. Canada's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2011, and the lack of enthusiasm displayed by other NATO members to enhance troop numbers in sync with the U.S. surge only points to internal dissension and insufficient resources and coalition partners for the protracted Afghan war.¹²⁵ The collapse of the Dutch government in February 2010 over whether to pull out its 2,000 troops from Afghanistan undermines the NATO alliance.¹²⁶ This development happened at a crucial time, with President Obama's troop surge in progress and NATO engaged in

¹²⁴ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 202. For more reports on U.S. plans about Pakistan's nuclear weapons read Christina Lamb's, "Elite U.S. Troops Ready to Combat Pakistani Nuclear Hijack," *Times*, January 17, 2010, and Seymour M. Hersh's, "Defending the Arsenal: In an unstable Pakistan, Can Nuclear Warheads be Kept Safe," *The New Yorker*, November 16, 2009.

¹²⁵ Gilles Dorronsoro, *Focus and Exit: An alternative Strategy for the Afghan War*. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, January 2009.
<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=22619&prog=zgp&proj=zsa> (accessed August 21, 2009).

¹²⁶ Nicholas Kulich, "Dutch Government Collapses Over its Stance on Troops in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2010.

major operations in Helmand (Marja). Apart from Americans, British, and Canadians, few other NATO members participate in combat operations. As NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop says:

...an honest assessment of Afghanistan must conclude that we are not where we might have hoped to be now. While the country's north and west are largely at peace and improving, south and east are riven by insurgency, drugs and ineffective government...And the populations in the countries that have contributed troops to the NATO-led mission are wondering how long this operation must last—and how many young men and women we will lose carrying it out.¹²⁷

7. Geo-Strategic Importance of the Region

Regionally, Afghanistan and Pakistan have immense geo-strategic significance as they provide access to Central Asia's energy riches via the Indian Ocean. Apart from the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, regional and international actors are vying to dominate the region to control these vast energy resources. The Caspian Sea alone holds the world's largest untapped fossil fuel reserves, estimated to be between 50 to 110 billion barrels of oil and 170 to 463 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.¹²⁸

The collapse of the Soviet Union has given rise to a profitable "new great game" of oil and gas thanks to which Central Asia "today is even a larger complex quagmire of competing interests."¹²⁹ This has resulted in powers like Russia, China, and the U.S., regional neighbors like Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, and the CARs themselves, not to mention powerful oil companies competing in this game.¹³⁰ Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey are primarily competing to host pipelines to pass through them. However, there can be no progress on the pipelines in the face of so many conflicting interests and the war in Afghanistan

¹²⁷ Christopher M. Schnaubelt, "NATO and the New U.S. Af-Pak Strategy," Research Paper, NATO Defense College, September 2009. http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current_news.php?icode=75 (accessed January 11, 2010).

¹²⁸ Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game* (New York, Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), 3.

¹²⁹ Rashid, *Taliban*, 145.

¹³⁰ For more details about the competition among UNOCAL, CHEVRON and BRIDAS Oil Companies see Chapter 11, Rashid, *Taliban*, 143–195.

Although the U.S. never recognized the Taliban formally after it took power in Kabul in 1996, a relatively small number of officials in the White House, CIA, and the State Department believed in the Taliban's narrative that "they wanted to clean the Afghan mess to create a new peace."¹³¹ Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel stressed at a meeting of the UN Security Council in December 1996 that all nations should engage with the Taliban for the sake of peace. The U.S. policy, as she outlined it, was as follows:

The Taliban control two-thirds of the country; they are Afghan, they are indigenous, they have demonstrated their staying power. The real source of their success has been the willingness of many Afghans, particularly Pashtuns, to tacitly trade unending fighting and chaos for a measure of peace and security, even with severe social restrictions.¹³²

The only thorn in U.S.-Taliban relations remained Bin-Laden's freedom to engage in operations from Afghanistan. However, by then "American policy in Central Asia had found another impetus: oil and gas."¹³³ Robin Raphel and many others in Washington believed that the Taliban could be useful partners in a new "Afghan solution" given their strategic location with Central Asia.¹³⁴ According to another report, Colin Powell, as U.S. Secretary of State, announced \$43 million in aid to the Taliban government in May 2001 for its efforts to eradicate opium in Afghanistan.¹³⁵ Despite the Taliban's refusal to hand over Bin-Laden, who had launched numerous attacks against the U.S.—including the 1998 attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa—the U.S. remained a major supporter of this regime only a few months before the 9/11 attacks.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 299.

¹³² Ibid., 335.

¹³³ Ibid., 300.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Robert Scheer, "Bush's Faustian Deal with the Taliban," *The Nation*, May 22, 2001. <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20010604/20010522>, (accessed November 13, 2009).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

8. The U.S. Image and Foreign Policy

The final factor that renders the COIN so difficult for not just the U.S. but other actors is what has happened to the image of the U.S. itself. The standing of the U.S.—“its position with respect to reputation, stature, or prestige in the world affairs—declined dramatically in the past decade.”¹³⁷ This decline in the U.S.’s standing seems to reflect holes in its foreign policy, its inconsistent diplomacy abroad, as well as troubles at home exacerbated by an economic meltdown and increasingly unpopular wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A blunt and unconditional pro-Israel U.S. Middle East policy is a major reason the U.S. is increasingly unpopular in the Middle East in particular, and the Islamic world in general. In a controversial book, *The Israeli Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, the political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “warn that Jewish Americans have built a behemoth that has bullied policymakers into putting Israel’s interests in the Middle East ahead of America’s.”¹³⁸ India, inspired by the influence of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), has formed its own lobbying group in the U.S., known as the U.S.-India Political Action Committee (USIPAC).¹³⁹ The influence of such lobbies in Washington steers U.S. foreign policy along dangerous paths, fueling charges of bias in the broader Islamic world—and providing al-Qaeda its recruits.

There is a great deal of public diplomacy required by the U.S. to improve its image and project “soft power” more effectively. According to Joseph Nye, “Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcome one wants.”¹⁴⁰ There are many options for attaining desired outcomes from other states. A state can coerce others by threats, can induce them with rewards, or can attract or co-opt them.¹⁴¹ The prime

¹³⁷ *U.S. Standing in the World: Causes, Consequences, and Future*. Virginia: American Political Science Association (APSA), Task Force Report (long Report), September 2009. http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/APSA_TF_USStanding_Long_Report.pdf (accessed December 2009).

¹³⁸ Mira Kamdar, “Forget the Israeli Lobby, The Hill’s Next Big Player Is Made in India,” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2007.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

criterion of power remains ascendancy in military, economic, and political capacities. However, not even this always guarantees desired outcomes—as the situation in Afghanistan makes clear.

According to Nye, soft power is “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”¹⁴² Although Nye believes that the U.S. can achieve its goals through soft rather than hard power, he observes that the U.S.’s goals and objectives are at odds with those of the world in general. According to Nye, soft power is a challenge, but essential to help the U.S. achieve its goals through attraction.¹⁴³ The U.S. has to be able to convince skeptics and critics in the Islamic world that its intentions in Afghanistan and Iraq are benign.

C. CONCLUSION

The Taliban have the advantage of ideal insurgency conditions in Afghanistan. As Galula says, “the trouble is that the enemy holds no ground and refuses to fight for it. He is everywhere and nowhere.”¹⁴⁴ The first law of successful COIN, according to Galula, is to acquire the support of the population.¹⁴⁵ The same is suggested by McCormick in his Mystic Diamond model that securing the population should be the first priority of the state. General McChrystal rightly identified securing the population as the mission of ISAF in his COIN guidance, issued in August 2009. However, this assertion needs to be reflected on the ground as well. Unfortunately, that has not yet happened. Without encouraging legitimate and effective indigenous government and security forces, the coalition cannot attract the local support it needs. This is a fact, repeatedly ignored by most policy makers in the West with regards to Afghanistan—a fact which must be addressed for a meaningful outcome.

South Asia has emerged as a serious security challenge for the U.S. in the post-9/11 world. A stable South Asia would not only help bring stability to Afghanistan, but

¹⁴² Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.

¹⁴³ Brantly Womack, “Dancing Alone: A Hard Look at the Soft Power,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, November 16, 2005. <http://japanfocus.org/-Brantly-Womack/1975> (accessed December 22, 2009).

¹⁴⁴ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 50.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 52–55.

to Central Asia, too. However, it would be naïve to imagine progress on this front without significant progress being made on the core issues that sustain the enduring rivalries in the region. For this the U.S. should genuinely press India and Pakistan to settle their dispute over Kashmir, for instance, either bilaterally or through the UN or international mediators. Until core disputes like Kashmir are resolved, new disputes will arise and make everything more complicated as the belligerents will waste no opportunity to exploit each other's vulnerabilities. To this end, U.S. policies in the region must be balanced—a tough call, but essential for a durable peace.

All important regional actors, but particularly Russia, China, India, and Iran must be taken on board, as the U.S. moves forward on Afghanistan. At the same time, to prevent a nuclear conflict or an accident—and also to prevent conventional mobilizations, simmering low intensity conflicts, extremism and terrorism, and means to guarantee restraint are urgently needed—perhaps more so in South and Central Asia than any place in the world. As General David Mckiernan said in 2008, “this is a regional insurgency and requires regional solutions.”¹⁴⁶ What he was alluding to was the complexity of an environment in which the U.S. can no longer rely on unilateralism or just a “coalition of the willing.”

The enemy the U.S. is confronting may not only be al-Qaeda, but rather those conditions that motivated its creation in the first place (political and territorial disputes in the Middle East, and in South and Central Asia). Those conditions are what provide al-Qaeda with its strength and recruits within the Islamic world. If the U.S. wants to effectively succeed against this threat, then it needs to redraw its policy to prevent those conditions that provide the terrorists their support base. To these ends the time has come to free U.S. foreign policy from the tangle of powerful lobbies in Washington, so that policies are made that genuinely protect U.S. interests rather than someone else's. One would hope to curtail the power of these lobbies, given the Afghan imbroglio and Iraq debacle, and the dire need to rebuild America's image in the world—especially in the Islamic world. Ideally, this means being smarter about soft rather than hard power.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Congress. Members and Committees. Congressional Research Service (CRS). *War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress*, R40156, December 3, 2009, 32. <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/r40156.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2010).

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IV. THE OPPOSING STRATEGIES

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without Strategy is the noise before defeat.

—Sun Tzu¹⁴⁷

A. INTRODUCTION

The earlier U.S. strategy in Afghanistan was based on the “Bush Doctrine,” which can be summed up as three concepts: preemption, unilateralism, and military hegemony.¹⁴⁸ This doctrine was adopted after the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., and has had its staunch supporters as well as detractors. The critics of the Bush doctrine claim that the doctrine has isolated the U.S. and served as the apparatus for “American Imperialism.”¹⁴⁹ Fareed Zakaria expresses his views about the doctrine this way:

Having spooked ourselves into believing that we have no option but to act fast, alone, unilaterally and pre-emptively, we have managed in six years to destroy decades of international good will, alienate allies, embolden enemies and yet solve few of the major international problems we face.¹⁵⁰

According to Ivan Arreguin-Toft, “Strategy is an actor’s plan for using armed forces to achieve military or political goals. Strategies incorporate actors’ understandings (rarely explicit) about the relative values of these objectives.”¹⁵¹ Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was aimed at achieving one of the objectives outlined in the

¹⁴⁷ “Sun Tzu Quotes,” Think Exists, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/strategy_without_tactics_is_the_slowest_route_to/220091.html (accessed November 25, 2009).

¹⁴⁸ John Maskaza, “A Crucial Juncture: American Foreign Policy and Asymmetric Warfare, *Strategic Insights*, Vol III, Issue, 2 (April 2009). <http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccp/publications/OnlineJournal/2009/Apr/maszkaApr09.html>, (accessed on November 21, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29.

comprehensive 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy—defeating al-Qaeda. However, after the removal of the Taliban regime over nine years ago, the U.S. is in no way close to achieving its declared objectives soon.

As per the Mystic Diamond model, the population becomes the focus of the state as well as the insurgents in such conflicts. In order to win over the population, the state must exert to deny the information advantage to the insurgents as it possesses the force advantage. This is only possible if the state uses a right COIN strategy to employ its force advantage against a weaker but well informed and resilient enemy. Having reviewed the history and peculiar nature of the insurgency in Afghanistan, we now turn to the opposing strategies of the belligerents. This chapter will focus on strategies on both sides of the Durand Line so that pertinent lessons can be drawn.

B. AFGHANISTAN

1. The Insurgents' Strategies

Most observers use the term “Taliban” when referring to the insurgents in Afghanistan. However, this is not a unified insurgency as it involves various independent groups. For instance, ISAF refers to these groups as comprising an “insurgent syndicate.”¹⁵² This syndicate includes the *Afghan Taliban* under Mullah Muhammad Omar, who is allegedly operating from Pakistan (Quetta Shura). Second, is the *Haqqani Network*, allied with the Taliban and al-Qaeda, allegedly operating from the NWA in the FATA. Jalal-ud-din Haqqani is an Afghan Jihad veteran who received substantial assistance from the CIA through the ISI against the Soviets.¹⁵³ The third player in the syndicate, *Hizb-i-Islami (HiG)*, is another old Afghan Mujahedeen organization led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. HiG received maximum support from the CIA against the Soviets and was considered an important U.S. ally.¹⁵⁴ HiG is also affiliated with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The fourth set of players, which are mere a conglomerate, are *foreign groups*; they play a critical role as enablers. They include al-Qaeda, which mobilizes foreign

¹⁵² CRS, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy*, 25.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

fighters from the Arab world, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and other Islamic countries to join the Jihad in Afghanistan. Similarly, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Sharia Mohammadia (TNSM), which operate from the neighboring FATA and NWFP of Pakistan, are in league with the insurgent syndicate in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁵ The table below provides rough estimates of insurgent strength and points to a consistent growth pattern over time:

| Insurgent alliance members | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Afghan Taliban | 4,000 | 7,000 | 7,500 | 12,500 | 17,000 |
| Jaish al Muslimeen | | | 1,000 | 750 | Reabsorbed into Taliban |
| Hizbe-i-Islami (HiG) | 800 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,250 | 1,500 |
| Al-Qaeda | | | 700 | 1,000 | 2,000 |
| Minor groups | | | | | 200 |
| Operating from FATA | 5,500 | | | | |

Table 4. Estimated insurgent strength between 2002 and 2006.¹⁵⁶

In 2008, David Kilcullen estimated the total effective strength of the Taliban as between 32,000 and 40,000.¹⁵⁷ But also important, as the table above suggests, is the insurgents' growth rate. A state cannot achieve much if the population is not protected against the insurgents; an insecure population will not provide the state with actionable information. The population only feels safe once the insurgents' power has been broken, which is only possible with sufficient and sustained COIN forces present in the area.

a. Al-Qaeda

In May 2008, then-CIA director Michael Hayden claimed the "near strategic defeat" of al-Qaeda due to the "successful" aerial drone attacks against al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan.¹⁵⁸ Recent developments challenge claims of this sort, such as the

¹⁵⁵ CRS, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy*, 27.

¹⁵⁶ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 68 and 132.

¹⁵⁷ Kilcullen, *Accidental Guerilla*, 48.

¹⁵⁸ Bruce Hoffman, "Al-Qaeda Has a New Strategy. Obama Needs One, Too," *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2010.

arrest of sleeper agent David Hadley (a U.S. citizen and rogue CIA recruit who was allegedly involved in the Mumbai attacks in 2008); the suicide attack by Khalil Ballawi, a double agent, who killed seven CIA agents in Afghanistan; and the attempt by Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight in the U.S.¹⁵⁹ Instead of repeating a 9/11-type blow against the U.S., al-Qaeda is now thought to have adopted a “death by a thousand cuts” approach—focusing mainly on economic warfare.¹⁶⁰

Among other things, al-Qaeda is intelligently exploiting the advantages that inhere in globalization by using carefully crafted propaganda on the Internet to find and recruit people from western countries as the “ultimate fifth columnists.”¹⁶¹ Another dangerous element of al-Qaeda’s strategy, revealed by its chief of global military operations, Ilyas Kashmiri, is to hit Indian targets “to chop off American strength.”¹⁶² By targeting India, al-Qaeda can conveniently trigger war between India and Pakistan, which may drag the U.S. into the conflict. In response to a question during an interview, Kashmiri said:

I will draw your attention to the basics of the present war theatre and use that to explain the whole strategy of the upcoming battles. Those who planned this battle actually aimed to bring the world’s biggest Satan [the U.S.] and its allies into the trap and swamp [Afghanistan]. Afghanistan is a unique place in the world where the hunter has all sorts of traps to choose from.¹⁶³

The costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2001 and 2009 have been \$255.5 billion and \$733.2 billion, respectively.¹⁶⁴ Continued U.S. commitment resulting in an even greater national debt may achieve Bin-Laden’s goal of bankrupting the U.S.’s will to continue prosecuting the fight. Al-Qaeda is succeeding in creating a

¹⁵⁹ Hoffman, “Al-Qaeda Has a New Strategy.”

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Saleem Shahzad, “The Real Danger is that Al-Qaeda and Neo-Taliban will Drag the U.S. Into Regional War,” *Boston Review*, January/February 2010. <http://bostonreview.net/BR35.1/shahzad.php> (accessed January 20, 2010).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ *The Cost of War in Afghanistan*. Philadelphia, PA: American Friends Service Committee, May 14, 2009. http://www.nationalpriorities.org/cost_of_war_afghanistan (accessed on January 10, 2010).

shortage of resources for America and her allies. Since al-Qaeda needs relatively few inputs to carry out its operations compared to anti-terror organizations, it can potentially succeed by even more effectively using those that it has. Considering the vast sums al-Qaeda has caused the coalition to have to expend relative to its gains indicates that al-Qaeda is waging effective economic warfare.

b. The Afghan Taliban

Donald Rumsfeld suggested in May 2003 that war in Afghanistan was in a “cleanup” phase.¹⁶⁵ Now, more than six years after Rumsfeld’s “optimistic” assessment, it is clear that Afghanistan is anything but a stable country and the cleanup phase is far from concluded. Troubling indicators like the free movement of insurgents in Afghanistan proves that the situation has deteriorated significantly. The goals of the Afghan Taliban are to: expel foreign forces from Afghanistan; undermine the Afghan government’s authority and perceptions of security; counter ISAF’s expansion by causing casualties; consolidate command and control, especially in the south and east; increase influence around the urban centers of Kandahar and Kabul; and establish a Sunni state under the Taliban’s Supreme Leader, Mullah Omar.¹⁶⁶

In order to achieve these objectives, the Taliban are pursuing a classic and time tested asymmetric warfare strategy—suitable for a weaker adversary.¹⁶⁷ The successful tactics used by the Mujahedeen against the Soviets were known as “Dukhi” (painful). These were to avoid symmetrical combat, attack soft targets, attack government elements, harass logistics, and ambush and mine.¹⁶⁸ These tactics could be interpreted as typical for “war of the flea.”¹⁶⁹ ISAF faces two additional tactics these days: suicide attacks (both personal and vehicle-borne), and use of Improvised Explosive Devices

¹⁶⁵ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan,” *Orbis*, Winter (2007), 71.

¹⁶⁶ Anthony Cordesman “The Afghanistan War at the End 2009: Crisis and New Realism,” *CSIS*, January 7, 2010. http://www.operationspaix.net/IMG/pdf/CSIS_afghanwaratend2009_2010-01-04_.pdf (accessed January 15, 2010).

¹⁶⁷ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 97.

¹⁶⁸ Khan, “History of Afghanistan.”

¹⁶⁹ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 99.

(IEDs) by the Taliban. The Taliban may have spent between \$20-45 million in 2006 to fund their campaign, but compare this to the \$15.5 billion spent by the U.S. in the same year (the cost of killing a Talib was \$15-16 million).¹⁷⁰

The Taliban have gradually established organizational structures and shadow governments in the provinces. As per press reports (McClatchy newspapers), U.S. officials acknowledge that “the Taliban now have a full-fledged insurgency and shadow governors in 33 out of 34 Provinces in Afghanistan, including those in the North.”¹⁷¹ This situation has grown worse over time, with the number of Provinces rising from 11 in 2005, 20 in 2006, to 28 in 2007, and 31 in 2008, despite a gradual increase in U.S. troop strength during these periods.¹⁷² These shadow governments mainly focus on providing justice, which is desperately needed in the country due to the total failure of the Karzai government.

The Taliban have understood the importance of popular support for their cause. The Taliban have showed remarkable flexibility in engaging the local population and addressing their genuine grievances against the Karzai government. The issue of tactical Rules of Engagement (ROE) was addressed by the Taliban in their Field Manual in May 2009 (significantly, the ISAF commander issued his COIN guidance in August 2009). Their ROE reflect their understanding of the importance of public support for their cause. For instance, some of the ROE outlined by the Taliban in this manual are: avoid civilian casualties and damage to their property; only “high value” targets may be selected for suicide attacks; Mujahedeen must behave well to win the hearts of the population; there should be no discrimination of the population on ethnic lines; enemy Prisoners of War (POWs) should be well treated; only Mullah Omar or a deputy is authorized to sanction executions; executions cannot be filmed; and enemy corpses cannot be desecrated.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 97–98.

¹⁷¹ Cordesman, “The Afghanistan War at the End 2009.”

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Field Manual 3-24, *Counter Counterinsurgency Operations—How to Win Friends and Influence People—Derived from Sharia/Islamic Law*. <https://www.intelink.gov/blogs/ctca/2009/07/28/the-taliban%e2%80%99s-image-makeover-rule-book/>. For more information see Alisa J. Rubin’s, “Taliban Overhaul Image to Win Allies,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 2010.

The Taliban are pursuing a relentless propaganda campaign as part of their information and psychological operations. According to British General David Richards, former commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, “he never saw a more sophisticated propaganda machine than the one put together by the Taliban.”¹⁷⁴ The Taliban grant interviews to journalists and use ‘night letters,’ usually hand written papers distributed to villagers or nailed to the walls and doors of mosques, schools and other public buildings in the villages.¹⁷⁵ The Taliban also produce magazines, broadcast radio (Voice of Sharia) via mobile transmitters, and have a Web site (www.alemarah.org).¹⁷⁶ The Internet is used to mobilize Muslim opinion worldwide to generate moral and material support for the resistance. It is also used to promote Pashtun nationalism against the NA-dominated Afghan government of Karzai. In their Internet magazines, the Taliban highlight the suffering of the Pashtuns: “Pashtuns are suffering everywhere; if you go and check the prisons, you won’t find any prisoners except Pashtuns; when you hear about bombings, it is Pashtuns’ homes that have been bombed.”¹⁷⁷

The Taliban have a reliable mechanism for channeling funds to the insurgency. Mullah Omar is believed to raise funds through an existing network of Jihadist supporters from throughout the Islamic world, particularly in the Middle East.¹⁷⁸ There are some who believe that Taliban funding also comes from relations with narco-traders. This relationship, if it exists, may be a secondary source of funding as the Taliban have openly admitted that they receive money from Arab sympathizers.¹⁷⁹

Asymmetric warfare remains the centerpiece of Taliban strategy. According to General David Barno, Commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2003–5, the Taliban is pursuing typical “Fourth Generation Warfare.”¹⁸⁰ This type of warfare “uses all available networks—political, economic, social, and military—to

¹⁷⁴ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 119.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Rubin, “Taliban Overhaul Image to Win Allies.”

¹⁷⁸ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 86.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 98.

convince the enemy's political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.”¹⁸¹ The Taliban is well aware that the Americans are impatient. Consequently, they boast, “NATO has all the watches, and we have all the time.”¹⁸² The winning strategy of the Taliban, as summarized by Gills Dorronsoro, is:

On-the-ground observations and reliable evidence suggests that the Taliban have an efficient leadership, are learning from their mistakes, and are quick to exploit the weaknesses of their adversaries. They are building a parallel administration, have nationwide logistics, and already manage an impressive intelligence network.¹⁸³

Predicting the impact and effectiveness of the recent U.S. surge and new COIN strategy is difficult at this stage given the type of COIN operations conducted by ISAF since 2001.

2. The U.S. Strategy

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that a statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.¹⁸⁴

After nine years, it can be said that the U.S. did not clearly think through its strategy in Afghanistan beyond removal of the Taliban regime. What next and how al-Qaeda will be dealt with remain an open ended affair. The CIA-led Special Operations Forces (SOF) delivered the required blow to the ragtag Taliban in a matter of weeks. Roughly 500 U.S. SOF personnel participated initially in OEF.¹⁸⁵ The task remained hunting down al-Qaeda and Taliban remnants even after U.S. conventional forces took

¹⁸¹ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 98.

¹⁸² James Shinn, “NATO Has the Watches, We Have the Time,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 27, 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704335904574497120548934550.html> (accessed December 23, 2009).

¹⁸³ Gilles Dorronsoro, *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan*. Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment, 2009. http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf (accessed on August 30, 2009).

¹⁸⁴ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88.

¹⁸⁵ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 189.

over.¹⁸⁶ According to the Bonn agreement in December 2001, ISAF's initial task was to secure the newly installed Karzi government. However, in 2003, ISAF's mandate was expanded by the UN to help stabilize the whole of Afghanistan.

However, since it did not have any presence in provinces outside Kabul for the initial four years, and particularly not including those where insurgency was brewing, ISAF remained focused on securing the government.¹⁸⁷ The U.S. had been pursuing Western style democracy, rule of law, and human rights in direct conflict with centuries-old tribal and Sharia-oriented attitudes, which have become the source of destabilization instead of stabilization—contrary to Western expectations.

Ideally, the U.S. military high command should have visualized the prospect of resistance and insurgency developing in the post-Taliban period. It then could have prepared comprehensive contingency plans in case the Taliban switched to an indirect approach. History should have served as a guide. According to Galula's analysis of COIN, a direct approach could have worked against the Taliban only once the insurgency reached the "cold revolutionary war" stage.¹⁸⁸ The U.S.'s inability to act decisively encouraged the Taliban to advance the insurgency to the "hot revolutionary war" stage, which now appears to be growing beyond the control of the world's mightiest military coalition.

According to Kilcullen writing in 2009, "I would not suggest that our current strategy is ineffective: in fact, it is difficult to be sure that we actually have a single coherent strategy."¹⁸⁹ Kilcullen further says that there are different campaigns occurring simultaneously in various regions of the country, by different ISAF members and Afghan forces, pursuing different but simultaneous tasks of COIN, Counter-Narcotics (CN), Counter-Terrorism (CT), economic development, and reconstruction.¹⁹⁰

There could be four main reasons for the present situation in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban period—all attributable to a flawed U.S. strategy: insufficient military

¹⁸⁶ Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 189.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 43-44.

¹⁸⁹ Kilcullen, *Accidental Guerilla*, 109.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 110.

resources dedicated to the post-war period; insufficient planning and resources for reconstruction and initiation of political processes within and outside Afghanistan; the revival of warlords¹⁹¹ and the narcotics trade with the backing of the Karzai government; and the Afghan government's lack of an indigenous security capability to protect its own population.¹⁹² U.S. dependence on a corrupt and incompetent Karzai government is probably the biggest challenge the U.S. faces in Afghanistan. But also, instead of exploiting the early success against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in 2001, President Bush committed a strategic mistake by invading Iraq in 2003.¹⁹³ While preparing for OEF, the U.S. leaders were already planning their next war in Iraq.¹⁹⁴ Consequently, the means required to be concentrated in Afghanistan were diverted to Iraq. Kofi Annan (the former UN Secretary-General) responded to the Iraq War by saying, "Iraq was more than just a major distraction to Afghanistan. The billions spent in Iraq were the billions not spent in Afghanistan."¹⁹⁵

a. The "AfPak" Strategy

ISAF is not executing the basics of COIN doctrine. Thus the first major recommendation of this assessment is to change and focus on what ISAF has the most control of: ISAF. The coalition must hold itself accountable before it can attempt to do so with others. –General McChrystal.¹⁹⁶

The crafting of Obama's "AfPak" strategy signaled the new administration's focus on the region. This shift in policy was designed, in part to highlight how confused the Bush administration had been about its goals and objectives

¹⁹¹ There are 700 warlords presently operating in Afghanistan, which will complicate the U.S. exit strategy. This was disclosed by Professor Noorzoy in his letter to Sam Farr, Member U.S. Congress, dated February 23, 2010. Siddieq Noorzoy, Director Afghan Research Society International. Interview by the author, March 12, 2010, Monterey, CA.

¹⁹² In November 2005, CBS news quoted "a Senior Drug Enforcement Officer" at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul as saying that he believed "90% of the district police chiefs in Afghanistan are either involved in the production of opium or protecting the trade in some way." Cited by Johnson and Mason in "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," 85.

¹⁹³ Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, XLII.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 64.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., XLI.

¹⁹⁶ COMISAF'S INITIAL ASSESSMENT, 2–11.

in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁷ Open ended war without a thought-through “end game” usually leads to a quagmire. The salient features of Obama’s policy have been: a troop surge in Afghanistan to break the status quo; expanded diplomatic efforts inside (such as reconciling with the moderate Taliban) as well as outside (with Russia, China, and Iran); a special emphasis on Pakistan; improvements in U.S. and NATO’s command and control system; a counter-narcotics offensive (wheat seed will be offered to farmers to replace the poppy crop and if they refuse their opium will be burned); and economic development.¹⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the Afpak strategy’s usefulness, it still has certain inherent limitations. First, this new term offended the Pakistanis, as people resented being lumped together with Afghanistan. Second, India, an important actor, has been completely left out of the scope of this strategy under strong pressure from India—again to the dismay of Pakistanis. Thus, two of the main regional actors were not properly engaged from the start.

The new “Afpak” strategy grew, in part, out of General McChrystal’s assessment written in August 2009.¹⁹⁹ This assessment outlined methods by which to support President Obama’s core goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qaeda and prevent their return to either Afghanistan or Pakistan.²⁰⁰ What this assessment signaled was that major changes would have to be made if an honorable outcome was to be achieved. The following excerpt from the summary highlights the situation in Afghanistan before the announcement of the new strategy:

The situation in Afghanistan is serious; neither success nor failure can be taken for granted. Although considerable effort and sacrifice have resulted in some progress, many indicators suggest the overall situation is deteriorating. We face not only a resilient and growing insurgency; there is also a crisis of confidence among Afghans—in both their government and the international community—that undermines our credibility and

¹⁹⁷ For more information see comments by John Nagl, Andrew J. Bacevich, Thomas H. Johnson, etc., in “Is the War in Afghanistan Worth Fighting,” *The Washington Post*, August 31, 2009.

¹⁹⁸ “President Obama’s ACPAK Strategy,” *South Asian Research and Analysis*, April 2, 2009. <http://pakistanpal.wordpress.com/2009/04/02/president-obamas-afghanistan-pakistan-afpak-strategy/> (accessed on August 20, 2009).

¹⁹⁹ For more information see *COMISAF’S INITIAL ASSESSMENT*.

²⁰⁰ President Barack Obama, “The New Way Forward,” (U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, December 1, 2009).

emboldens the insurgents. Further, a perception that our *resolve* is uncertain makes the Afghans reluctant to align with us against the insurgents.²⁰¹

President Obama's commitment of another 30,000 troops to Afghanistan will add to the 68,000 U.S. and 39,000 non-U.S. ISAF troops already there. According to the President, another 7,000 troops have been committed by U.S. allies for this surge, thus, yielding a total coalition military strength of some 144,000 at the peak of this phased surge. With this surge in troops, President Obama hopes to target the insurgency and break its momentum, and better secure the "population centers."

Unfortunately, this may represent wishful thinking on the part of the U.S. military, as if the Taliban will come out of their holes or caves to contest General McChrystal conventionally, only to be defeated. Most likely, the Taliban will follow the time-tested asymmetric guerilla warfare strategy of exhausting the coalition. Eighty percent of U.S. and NATO casualties have been inflicted through the use of IEDs or suicide attacks in Afghanistan; the surge of 30,000 only increases the targets for such attacks.²⁰²

The flip side of this strategy is that it is also constrained by the President's 18 month-long timeline. Thereafter, the U.S. will start drawing down—an ambitious strategy, rarely if ever used if one examines military history. Historically, the average insurgency lasts fifteen years: For example, the successful British campaign in Malaya in the 1950s took twelve years.²⁰³ The timeline for successfully accomplishing the President's desired goals has many serious implications—especially if one considers Afghanistan's history of un-ending wars. The timeline provides the enemy with plenty of opportunities to adjust to America's clock. The Afghan population sitting on the fence can see who is winning, and other stake-holders can plan their respective counter-moves with a degree of ease.

Ironically, what the Obama administration aimed to signal with its strategy was assured success. But what if the U.S. fails to meet the desired objectives in time? The

²⁰¹ *COMISAF'S INITIAL ASSESSMENT*, 1-1.

²⁰² Saleem, "Can't Win, Blame Pakistan."

²⁰³ Shinn, "NATO Has the Watches."

failure to meet the declared objectives will have immense political and military repercussions domestically, regionally and internationally—jeopardizing the entire mission. Unfortunately, too, the new strategy clearly overlooks support from important actors like Iran, Russia, and China. In this short timeframe, other issues affecting U.S. relations with these same actors will prevent them from extending their cooperation to the U.S. (see chapter V). Like al-Qaeda, all of them are likelier to “love the idea of America doing a long, slow bleed in Afghanistan.”²⁰⁴

Also, eighty percent of the Afghan population lives in the rural areas and not the cities.²⁰⁵ It is the rural population that acts as a “sea” in which the insurgent “fish” swim—not a few urban areas, which the new strategy aims to continue to protect. It is hard to imagine that ISAF can succeed in securing the rural population with this phased surge of just eighteen months. Securing an area implies clearing it first, and then holding it—to deny it falling back to the insurgents. According to Galula, the recommended ratio of military and insurgent forces is *ten or twenty to one* once the resistance reaches the guerrilla warfare stage.²⁰⁶ The French forces in Indo-China, for instance, never approached this ratio, “a fact that, more than any other, explains why the French could not have won there even if they had been led by Napoleon, regardless of the power of the nationalist cause initially.”²⁰⁷

The estimated Taliban strength of 32,000 to 40,000 would require some 320,000 to 800,000 troops for effective COIN operations given Galula’s troops-to-task ratio estimates. The combined forces of Afghanistan and ISAF will be about 316,000 at peak surge (172,000 Afghans plus 144,000 ISAF), far less than those needed if the insurgents are close to 40,000 or more—and this, too, in a country like Afghanistan. The Soviets had around 120,000 troops (without having any of the problems of *multinational* coordination to contend with) and were faced with similar conditions, and failed in the end. The Soviets, like the U.S., mostly concentrated on Afghanistan’s few urban areas,

²⁰⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, “Don’t Build Up,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 2009.

²⁰⁵ Johnson and Mason, “Refighting the Last War.”

²⁰⁶ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 21.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

leaving the rural population—about eighty percent of the total—insecure. The Soviets were then confronted by the fact that their rival superpower (the U.S.) threw its weight behind the Mujahedeen, whereas no such counterbalancing support exists for the insurgents in Afghanistan today—a huge advantage for the U.S. Being in the neighborhood, however, the Soviets did have the advantage of uninterrupted and reliable logistical support. In contrast, the U.S. is mainly dependent upon Pakistan’s land and air space for its thousands of miles’ long logistical trail to Afghanistan.

b. Reintegrating the Taliban

Surprisingly, before the surge, some in the international community were advocating accommodation with the Taliban. This was spearheaded by President Karzai. General McChrystal has announced that the U.S. is ready to accept the Taliban in the government.²⁰⁸ The removal of the names of five Taliban leaders from the UN blacklist, at President Karzai’s request, before the January 28, 2010 London Conference represents a significant shift in the U.S. approach toward the Taliban. The U.S. and Karzai’s government have indicated their willingness to “buy-off” the mid-and lower-level Taliban in an effort to “re-integrate” moderate Taliban into mainstream Afghan politics. According to a Pakistan-based Afghanistan expert, Rahimullah Yusufzai (a Pashtun), this tactic will fail however:

The term “Taliban for sale” and “pay for peace” are good for creating a dramatic effect, but such words don’t explain the reality. It is possible that the Taliban would face big human and material losses and lose control of their strongholds as the ‘surge’ intensifies and money is doled out to recruit anti-Taliban militias, but none should expect them to surrender, sell-off their souls en masse or agree to a peace and power-sharing accord that clashes with their goals and principles.²⁰⁹

At the same time Pakistan is being asked to extend operations in the North Waziristan Agency (NWA) against the suspected Haqqani network and Quetta Shura. Yet ironically, Pakistan came in for severe criticism when its government signed deals with the TTP to achieve peace in Pakistan. This is a classic example of a double standard.

²⁰⁸ Anwar Iqbal, “Taliban Leaders May Join Afghan Government: U.S.,” *Dawn*, January 26, 2010.

²⁰⁹ Rahimullah Yusufzai, “Courting the Taliban,” *The News*, February 2, 2010.

Worse, before this public offer of reintegration, the U.S. had already conducted a round of negotiations with the Taliban, mediated by the Saudis.²¹⁰

Prior to continuing down this path of trying to co-opt the “moderate” Taliban, it is critical to accurately assess the likely “splits” in the Taliban movement and among their allies, especially with al-Qaeda. As of today there are no clear indicators that there *are* any splits. Negotiations with the Taliban at this stage and under the current circumstances would amount to little more than ‘appeasement.’

Another important variable that needs to be considered is whether the Taliban are expansionist or not. If they come to power again will they conduct themselves in the same fashion as they did prior to their removal? Will they promote the Jihadists and protect al-Qaeda? If the answer to these questions is ‘affirmative,’ then the only option is to continue the fight—but not necessarily by military means alone.²¹¹ Instead, it may be time to pursue political *reconciliation* inside and outside of Afghanistan by accepting the role of other actors in the conflict. Even to secure some modicum of domestic reconciliation, the Afghan government needs to do so from a position of strength; it must gain sufficient domestic legitimacy within Afghanistan if it hopes to force the Taliban to have to talk.

Unfortunately, America’s 18 month-long timeline is insufficient to reach a position of strength against a determined and tested enemy. According to General Kayani, it will take a minimum of four years to prepare the ANA and ANP to be able to perform their respective duties, provided the international community stays committed after the U.S. starts thinning out its forces in 2011.²¹² The Taliban are aware of Western exhaustion and the U.S. public’s impatience, which has only increased their resolve.

Instead of working on buying-off moderate Taliban—again a short-term and questionable approach—it would be more prudent to work on re-conciliation with the Taliban. The buying-off policy has already fallen apart after “Operation Moshtarak” in

²¹⁰ Ali Ahmad, *Af-Pak; A Strategic Opportunity for South Asia*. New Delhi, India: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), Special Report No 87, December 2009, 4. <http://ipcs.org/special-report/india/af-pak-a-strategic-opportunity-for-south-asia-87.html> (accessed January 12, 2010).

²¹¹ Ibid., 8.

²¹² Arif Nizami, “Kayani’s Glasnost,” *The News*, February 6, 2010.

Marja. As Major James Coffman (Sixth Marine, Third Battalion) confirmed, “the Taliban are everywhere,” and “they have completely paralyzed folks here.”²¹³ Due to this, payments to the locals have been hampered and are proving ineffective.

The Pashtuns and Taliban are a reality in and of Afghanistan without whom sustainable peace cannot be achieved. Toward that end, Ahmed Rashid has suggested a number of useful steps which should be taken: all neighbors and important actors need to be convinced about reconciliation with the Taliban for it to work, to include the Afghan government first and foremost. Names of Taliban leaders from the UNSC’s terrorist list issued in 2001 should be removed provided there is sufficient assurance that these leaders have broken ties with al-Qaeda and renounced violence. There should be a UN mandate for the Afghan government to negotiate with the Taliban. NATO and Afghan forces should offer assurances that Taliban and their families can return safely to Afghanistan (achieved via UNHCR and ICRC). Pakistan and Saudi Arabia should be encouraged to facilitate this process and convince the Taliban to form a legal political party, like Hikmatyar’s HiG. Saudi Arabia or some other neutral venue should host negotiations between the Afghan government and NATO.²¹⁴

According to Professor Siddieq Noorzoy, Director of Afghanistan Research International in the U.S., the U.S. policy needs an immediate change, as kinetics and the killing of Afghan civilians will only further inflame the Afghan resistance:

President Obama’s statement that the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan will not be open ended is a clear sign for many things to change given his deadline of July 2011 for troop withdrawal. We worry about the immense problems that are regularly reported by the Afghan television and print media and the lack of direction for solving them. The need for the change in policy from war to peace is now, not 18 months from now.²¹⁵

Bearing in mind history and its nine years of experience in Afghanistan, the U.S. must realize that ultimately it is the Afghans who should determine their future. Meanwhile,

²¹³ Opel, “Hurting US Efforts to Win Minds.”

²¹⁴ Rashid, “A Deal with the Taliban?”

²¹⁵ Noorzoy, Interview.

without taking into account the rights of Pashtuns, the majority ethnic group, no form of foreign-backed government will survive after ISAF pulls out. There is a pressing need for the U.S. to help the Afghans convene a Grand Jirgah as per their traditions. The U.S. should facilitate and back this—but then allow the Afghans to develop solutions to their problems. Of course, this proposed Jirgah must also have the support of *all* other interested regional and international actors, as well.

C. PAKISTAN

Since gaining Independence in 1947, Pakistan has confronted several militant and insurgent movements due to unsettled borders with India and Afghanistan. These include: the Baluch insurgencies (1947, 1958–59, 1963–69, 1973–77), the Pashtun nationalist movement (1950–1970), the Sindhi (*Sindhudesh*) movement (1970s), the Bengali insurgency (1971), the Mohajir movement in Karachi (1990s) and the ongoing insurgencies in Baluchistan and the FATA post-9/11.²¹⁶ What these reflect is that Pakistan has never been at ease and has had good reason to be constantly wary of internal as well as external threats. In 1971, India-sponsored Bengali (Mukti Bahini) insurgents helped defeat the Pakistan army. The Indian army's intervention then resulted in the creation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan. The creation of Bangladesh is a rare example of open external support and aggression paving the way to insurgent success. The tragedy in this for Pakistan is that Pakistan used a flawed “coercive” or “out-terrorize-the-terrorist” policy instead of dealing with the problem via constitutional and political measures.²¹⁷ Unfortunately, Pakistan failed to learn from this tragedy and continues to suffer from similar internal problems.

Pakistan's national security strategy is a product of the country's creation, its multiethnic population, and its perceptions of who threatens it geostrategically.²¹⁸ To

²¹⁶ Haider Ali Hussain Mullick, *Helping Pakistan to Defeat the Taliban: A Joint Action Agenda for the U.S. and Pakistan*. Clinton Town, MI: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), August 2009, 8–16. <http://haidermullick.com/Documents/ISPU%20-%20August%202009%20-%20Helping%20Pakistan%20Defeat%20Taliban%20Haider%20Mullick.pdf> (accessed December 21, 2009).

²¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

²¹⁸ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 10.

preserve its integrity, Pakistan has fought more often against internal enemies than with India—with whom it has fought three major wars and countless skirmishes along the disputed Kashmir border. Consequently, Pakistan is a security conscious state—always under threat from internal and external forces, vulnerable to religious extremism, dependent upon the U.S., China, and the Middle East for military and economic assistance, and with a shaky political system.²¹⁹

1. Strategy of Pakistani Taliban

Notably, there were neither Taliban nor any significant network of al-Qaeda in the FATA or anywhere else in Pakistan prior to the launching of OEF. Suicide attacks in Pakistan only began in 2005, three years after the invasion of Afghanistan.²²⁰ As the U.S. decided to invade Afghanistan, Pakistan feared that the war there would push the Taliban and al-Qaeda to the FATA, which would then drag Pakistan into the conflict. This would pit Pakistan against its own population in the FATA—a vulnerability that Pakistan's enemies could then exploit to their maximum. All of this has since come to pass. The home grown terror network, TTP, has paralyzed Pakistan since its inception in 2007.²²¹ The TTP was formed by leaders of some 40 militant groups, all having different agendas.²²² The TTP was initially led by Baitullah Mehsud from South Waziristan Agency (SWA) until his death in August 2009 in a U.S. drone attack, and then by his deputy, Hakimullah Mehsud, who was also reportedly killed in a similar strike later.

The TTP has links with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, as well as with Punjab-based Jihadi outfits like Jaish-e-Muhammad.²²³ This deadly network operates from the

²¹⁹ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 10.

²²⁰ Afghan Index, October 2009.

²²¹ Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*, 17.

²²² Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 1, Issue 2, January 2008, 2.

²²³ In an interview, Hakimullah Mehsud said, "We have respect for al-Qaeda and Jihadist organizations—we are with them." See, "Hakimullah Surfaces in Video," *Daily Times*, October 6, 2009. In the same interview, declaring that there is no difference between the TTP and the Afghan Taliban, other than operating in different geographic zones, he described Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar as his *Amir* (leader). He also denied the presence of Bin-Laden and Mullah Omar in Pakistan and said that they could be anywhere in "Allah's Land." Also see, Rahimullah Yousafzai, "Hakimullah Meets Reporters to Show He is Alive," *The News*, October 6, 2009.

FATA and NWFP, with reach into mainland Pakistan. The TTP is primarily engaged in combating the Pakistan army and the state due to Pakistan's support of the U.S. in Afghanistan. The objectives of the TTP are to: enforce Sharia; unite against NATO forces in Afghanistan and perform defensive Jihad against the Pakistan army; react strongly if military operations continue in Swat and the FATA; ensure demand abolishment of all military checkpoints in the FATA; and secure the release of Lal-Masjid (Red Mosque) Imam Abdul Aziz.²²⁴

The TTP has taken the battle to the Pakistani mainland and is responsible for most of the recent terrorist activity there, including the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the Marriott Hotel bombings, and the attacks on the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Pakistan Army in November 2009. Its attacks increased after the Pakistan Army went into the TNSM stronghold in Swat in April 2009 and then SWA in October 2009, which is where the TTP was headquartered, did its training, and indoctrinated suicide bombers. The increased intensity of terror attacks and casualties during the army's military operations against the terrorists in Swat and the FATA reflects the TTP's strategy of countering military operations against it. The resultant violence in Pakistan reveals Pakistan's vulnerability and the price it is paying for its partnership with the U.S. The other elements of the TTP's strategy are almost identical to those of the Afghan Taliban.

The TTP's terrorism largely targets the Pakistani state security apparatus (armed forces, intelligence agencies, FC NWFP, and Police) in operational as well as settled areas, and pro-government leaders in the NWFP and the FATA. In at least one way, the Afghan Taliban is different from its TTP collaborator; the Afghan Taliban have changed their ways and are conscious of the importance of public support. The Pakistani Taliban, on the other hand, are not at all bothered about public support and are targeting civilians and security forces alike. The Afghan Taliban might have a "just" cause for their struggle against foreign occupation; in contrast, the Pakistani Taliban have no such cause. Nor do they enjoy any support in Pakistan given their acts of terrorism, and their unorthodox and myopic religious beliefs. Because of this, skeptics in Pakistan believe that the TTP has

²²⁴ Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," 2.

only one agenda, which is dictated and sponsored from outside: to destabilize Pakistan and demoralize its public through senseless acts of terrorism. An account of violence and resultant casualties in only six months of 2009 is presented in Figure 8.

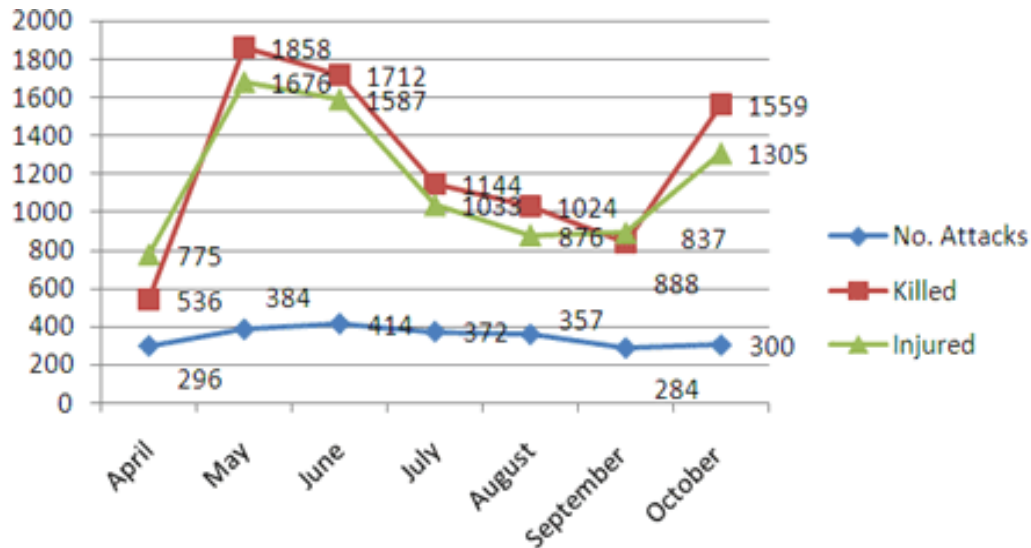


Figure 8. Record of violence in six months in Pakistan in 2009.²²⁵

2. Pakistan's Strategy

Pakistan got sucked into the Afghanistan conflict due to geography—just as it did during the Soviet occupation and throughout the history of Afghanistan prior to the partition of India. Pakistan's main worry has always been India. Any development in Afghanistan that has favored return of Indian influence to Afghanistan could be fatal to Pakistan's security due to their enduring rivalry. Pakistan also feared an Indian "misadventure" in Kashmir if it did not join the U.S.—knowing full well that India had offered the U.S. full cooperation after the 9/11 attacks.²²⁶ Pakistan thus proactively

²²⁵ Downloaded from *Annual Security Report 2009*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), October 2009. <http://san-pips.com/index.php?action=reports&id=74>. (accessed December 20, 2009).

²²⁶ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 202.

pursued the elimination of terrorists and sought to deny the use of its territory through the effective articulation of a three pronged strategy of *Political, Military and Development* measures in the FATA.²²⁷

a. Political Measures

Political measures revolved around the *Maliks (tribal elders), PAs, and the FC NWFP*. The army was present to supplement the political administration of the FATA. The PAs worked to revive the role of Maliks as those who could gather support from the larger tribal population against the terrorists. In fact, al-Qaeda, through psychological and monetary blackmail, succeeded in establishing “reverse control” over otherwise patriotic, tribal people. More than 120 tribal elders were murdered during 2006 alone for opposing the Taliban and al-Qaeda.²²⁸

The political processes put in place included several peace accords with the tribes attracted severe criticism from the U.S. There were four major peace deals with the militants: the first in Shakai in April 2004, the second in Sararogha in February 2005, the third in Set in NWA in August 2006, and the fourth in Swat in February 2009.²²⁹ No peace accord ever survived. For example, the NWA peace agreement of 2006 did not last long after a deadly U.S. drone attack in Bajaur agency, killing 82 people, including 80 children.²³⁰ This attack proved to be a watershed event for Pakistan. The incident sowed the seeds of anti-U.S. hatred among the tribes who vowed to join the Jihad against the U.S. in Afghanistan and fight the Pakistan army as well. Formation of the TTP in 2007 can be attributed to this U.S. provocation—giving impetus to “Talibinization” in the FATA and NWFP. Slogans like “Down with America” and “Down with Musharraf” were shouted at demonstrations sparked by these attacks.²³¹

²²⁷ Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*, 12.

²²⁸ Rashid, *Decent into Chaos*, 278.

²²⁹ Nawaz, *FATA*, 25.

²³⁰ Amir Waseem, “Opposition Seeks Debate on Bajaur Attack,” *The Dawn*, November 1, 2006.

²³¹ “Protest Against Air Strike,” *The Dawn*, November 1, 2006.

The fourth peace deal (the Malakand Accord) with the Swat Taliban (TNSM) was reached in February 2009 through a traditional Jirga process.²³² This peace deal had the approval of Pakistan's national parliament on the strong recommendation of the provincial government in the NWFP. The government had agreed to allow *Islamic Sharia* courts in Malakand Division to satisfy public demands and not because it felt pressured to do so by the TNSM. In fact, the peace deal ended up being sabotaged by TNSM leaders as the Taliban started moving into the settled areas of Buner and Shangla, declaring Pakistan's constitution to be "un-Islamic."²³³ These excesses by the TNSM in the settled areas attracted severe public resentment, and enabled the government to finally use military force against them. By gaining public support in the Taliban's home town of Swat, the government succeeded in achieving a major breakthrough against the Taliban in Pakistan. Gradually, the information advantage to the Taliban began to diminish in favor of the government, laying the foundation for the forthcoming successes in Swat.

b. Economic Measures

The FATA has the most dismal economic indicators in Pakistan. Literacy is only 17%, compared to 40% in the rest of Pakistan. Per capita income is \$250 against \$500 for the national average, and 66% of population lives below the poverty line.²³⁴ In an attempt to demonstrate the state's seriousness in developing the FATA, the government increased the Annual Development Program by 214 % from 2001 to 2002.²³⁵ This effort was negligible, however, in view of the decades-long deliberate neglect of the FATA by successive Pakistani governments.

The Pakistan army became the engine of this development work. Within a period of three years, about 900 schools were built and textbooks worth \$0.8 million were distributed in the area. 14,000 kilometers of roads were constructed in only two years and

²³² Bill Rogio, "Swat Peace Agreement Collapses," *The Long War Journal*, April 9, 2009. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/swat_peace_agreement.php (accessed (June 2, 2009)).

²³³ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 20.

²³⁴ Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*, 5.

²³⁵ Haq, Khan, and Noori, "The Federally Administered Areas of Pakistan."

work on 12 small dams was initiated for agricultural purposes. Similarly, projects on health were initiated by the government both on its own and with the help of NGOs.²³⁶

Beginning in 2006, the Pakistan government announced a nine-year development plan worth \$2 billion with partial help from donors, including USAID.²³⁷ At the special request of President Musharraf, President Bush pledged an additional \$750 million for development of the FATA over the next five.²³⁸ Another development effort pledged by President Bush was establishment of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs), which would offer duty-free access to U.S. markets for specific items produced in factories constructed in a ROZ.²³⁹ Since the ROZs required congressional approval, this plan is still pending, and the new administration has not shown any interest in carrying it through. Overall, the flow of funds can be said to be insufficient (only 30 to 38% funds reach the FATA and its people on the ground) due to complicated procedures involved in trying to implement USAID projects.²⁴⁰ Also, while there is the widespread perception that the U.S. paid Pakistan \$10.5 billion during the first seven years of its cooperation with the U.S., it is seldom recognized that over \$5.5 billion of this amount included reimbursements.²⁴¹ Pakistan, on the other hand, suffered over \$34 billion of losses due to the turbulent situation in and with Afghanistan during the same period.²⁴²

c. Military Measures (2001–2008)

Pakistan decided to support OEF forces inside Afghanistan by providing the U.S. crucial air bases and air space. The Pakistan army hurriedly pulled together plans to stop terrorists who might slip into the FATA as a consequence of the Tora-Bora bombing in December 2001. Unfortunately, this bombing, while spectacularly executed, lacked an articulated plan on the ground to trap Bin-Laden or Mullah Omar. This proved

²³⁶ Haq, Khan, and Noori, “The Federally Administered Areas of Pakistan.”

²³⁷ Markey, *Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt*, 13.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

²⁴⁰ Nawaz, *FATA*, 21.

²⁴¹ Markey, *Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt*, 19.

²⁴² Hamid Mir, “Pak-U.S. Ties at the Lowest Ebb,” *The News*, April 9, 2009.

Pakistani fears correct about the expected influx of Jihadists toward the FATA. At that time, the border was thinly held by the FC NWFP only.

After some coordination with the U.S., elements of the Pakistan army launched its first ever military operation in the FATA (Al-Mizan 1) on December 11, 2001 to occupy snow-covered mountains opposite Tora-Bora, using a few helicopters and animal transport.²⁴³ The “No Go”²⁴⁴ areas of Kurram and Khyber agencies were absorbed by the Pakistan army, after obtaining the support of the tribes. The tribes initially assured full cooperation with the army on condition that no foreign troops would be allowed to enter the FATA; there would be no aerial bombing, and no permanent stay in the FATA or construction of cantonments. However, the routes along the NWA and SWA could not be effectively blocked due to a paucity of time, resources, and lack of coordination across the border. Across the Durand Line, meanwhile, no serious efforts were made by U.S. Special Operations Force (SOF) to cordon the bombing zone and kill the terrorists who were “smoked” out after the bombing. Unfortunately, the U.S. relied on the Afghan warlords instead—after heavy monetary inducements—despite the availability of sufficient troops in or near Afghanistan to execute this crucial task.²⁴⁵

In its report to members of Congress, the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate admits faulty planning, while also acknowledging that:

...the decisions that opened the door for his escape to Pakistan allowed Bin Laden to emerge as a potent symbolic figure who continues to attract a steady flow of money and inspire fanatics worldwide. The failure to finish the job represents a lost opportunity that forever altered the course of the conflict in Afghanistan and the future of international terrorism.²⁴⁶

To make matters worse for Pakistan, thousands of people from neighboring FATA crossed over into Afghanistan to join the Taliban “Jihad” against the U.S.²⁴⁷ With nearly

²⁴³ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 265.

²⁴⁴ According to the agreement with the tribes after the Partition in 1947, less the use of existing roads and tracks, all other areas are “No Go” areas for the Pakistan army.

²⁴⁵ U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Tora-Bora Revisited: How We Failed to Get Bin Laden and Why it Matters Today*. 111th Cong., 1st sess., November 30, 2009, 5. http://foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Tora_Bora_Report.pdf (accessed January 12, 2010).

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.

²⁴⁷ Rashid, *Decent Into Chaos*, 77.

300 kms of shared border, SWA became the hub for al-Qaeda and the Taliban as a result of this bombing.²⁴⁸ Within such short notice and such hurriedly conceived plans, the entire border with Afghanistan could not be sealed. In the best of times, this would have been an impossible proposition just given the status of this border. With the tribes' support, however, the Pakistan army still managed to successfully net 240 al-Qaeda terrorists trying to flee the Tora-Bora bombing in December 2001—its biggest catch in a single anti-terrorist operation.²⁴⁹ The Pakistan army and the FC NWFP also gradually found themselves committed in CT operations in the FATA from December 2001 on—a task for which they were not trained, equipped, or prepared. Due to these handicaps, the Pakistan army applied the direct approach against the indirect approach of the terrorists, and suffered serious setbacks during its initial years in the FATA.

The U.S. launched Operation “Anaconda” in Eastern Afghanistan in March 2002 in a renewed effort to arrest or kill al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders who had escaped the relentless Tora-Bora bombing campaign. According to the Afghan government and the U.S., these leaders had crossed into the Waziristan agencies of the FATA.²⁵⁰ Pakistan came under pressure from the U.S. to pursue these most wanted terrorists in coordination with the U.S. However, in December 2001, a few months before the U.S. decided to launch Operation Anaconda, Pakistan's anti-terrorist operations received a severe blow when Indian armed forces mobilized along Pakistan's eastern border after a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament. India held Pakistan responsible for this attack and threatened to invade Pakistan if it did not meet Indian conditions—taking the lead from the U.S.'s policy toward and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan. The Pakistan army, despite its mobilization against the Indian threat in the east, launched Operation Al-Mizan-2 in NWA and SWA in June 2002 to support the U.S. across the border—virtually fighting a two-front war with extremely limited resources.

The Pakistan army adopted three fold to operations: effectively check cross-border movement; dominate the internal environment by saturating the FATA with

²⁴⁸ Rashid, *Decent Into Chaos*, 265.

²⁴⁹ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 265.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 217–221.

troops; and strike the terrorists' hideouts and their activities through a helicopter-borne Special Operations Task Force (SOTF), comprising an elite Special Services Group (SSG) battalion of the Pakistan army as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF).²⁵¹ The specific technique adopted while approaching a suspected target in the FATA was "cordon, search, and destroy."²⁵² No serious efforts were made to "hold" these areas due to the hazards in maintaining any force in such a hostile environment, with such a vulnerable logistics trail—completely ground-based and deep.

Because Pakistan lacked the requisite number of helicopters for the SOTF operations, the U.S. was asked to assist. The U.S. response, according to President Musharraf, was too little and too late as the U.S. provided vintage (Bell) helicopters, which did not reach Pakistan until 2003.²⁵³ These Bell helicopters lacked night flying capability and were ineffective at high altitude—which comprised most of the FATA.²⁵⁴ The promised Cobra attack helicopters also arrived late and in reduced numbers in 2008. Although the U.S. had also committed to reinforce Pakistan's human intelligence capacity with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other sophisticated technical means, this assistance also did not materialize for any meaningful SOTF operations.²⁵⁵

Despite these challenges, within a year the Pakistan army achieved major successes against terrorists in both Waziristan agencies. Pakistan committed over 80,000 troops in various operations in the FATA during this period, establishing some 900 posts along the Durand Line.²⁵⁶ The number of posts manned by Pakistan later increased to 1,000 with just 84 managed by the ANA and ISAF on the Afghanistan side of the line.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 264–274.

²⁵² Ibid., 266.

²⁵³ Ibid., 267.

²⁵⁴ Nawaz, *FATA*, 34.

²⁵⁵ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 266.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 272.

²⁵⁷ Nawaz, *FATA*, 15–17.

U.S. troops gradually increased from 9,000 to 19,000 between 2002 and 2005;²⁵⁸ However, the combined coalition strength reached 50,000 by 2007—yet most of this remained concentrated near a few cities.²⁵⁹

The Pakistan army launched operations in all the agencies, pursuing terrorists after breaking up their bases in one agency after another. Al-Qaeda's sanctuaries were dismantled while hundreds of al-Qaeda members and their local sympathizers were killed or captured by 2006.²⁶⁰ In fact, 689 al-Qaeda suspects, belonging to 26 different nationalities, were captured—of which 369 were handed over to the U.S.²⁶¹ Prominent al-Qaeda operatives arrested from Pakistan and handed over to the U.S. included Abu Zubeda, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, Abu Hafs Al-Masri, and Abu Faraj Al-Libbi.²⁶² It has proved difficult for Pakistanis to see Pakistan continuously blamed for harboring top al-Qaeda leaders after having delivered leaders like those mentioned above.

A major offensive, Operation *Sher Dil* (Lion Heart), was launched by the Inspector General (IG) FC NWFP, Major General Tariq Khan, a Pashtun himself, in Bajaur in August 2008 to prevent the Taliban taking over Khar, district headquarters of Bajaur. This operation succeeded in breaking up al-Qaeda's and the Taliban's hub in Bajaur, laying the foundation for successful operations to follow. This operation succeeded due to the IG's strategy: secure the population through patrols, create tribal *lashkars* (militias), support Jirghas and, most importantly, take concrete measures to raise the morale of the troops.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Jason Campbell, Michael O'Hanlon and Jeremy Shapiro, "How to Measure the War," *Policy Review*, No. 157, October-November 2009.
<http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/61323097.html> (accessed December 28, 2009).

²⁵⁹ Pierre Tristam, "U.S. and NATO Troop's Deployment: Facts, Successes and Failures, *Middle East Issues*. <http://middleeast.about.com/od/afghanistan/i/me070909.htm>, (accessed on December 20, 2009).

²⁶⁰ Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire*, 265–174.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 237.

²⁶² Ibid., 245–56.

²⁶³ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 19.

One disturbing fallout from the conflict in the FATA and Swat has been the displacement of about 3.5 million people from these areas.²⁶⁴ Such a mass exodus has not only enhanced security problems within Pakistan, but it has proved a drain on its faltering economy.

d. Military Measures in 2009

After the provocative excesses by the TNSM group in the Swat Valley in April 2009, Pakistan launched its biggest military operation since 2001 outside the FATA, in Swat town. This operation, *Rah-e-Raast* (Righteous Path), was launched in May 2009 with support from the Pakistan Air Force, along with gunship helicopters, artillery, tanks, and SOTF. The total commitment of Pakistani troops in Swat and the FATA rose to 152,000.²⁶⁵ Such a massive military operation in a proper, built-up area caused the evacuation of 2.5 million people from Swat before the operation.²⁶⁶ These people became Internally Displaced People (IDPs), which placed a huge political and socio-economic burden on the Pakistan government. According to Haider Mullick, in doing this the Pakistan army employed a new “hybrid COIN” strategy, “one that centered on a military institutional pride contingent upon political support and brought about by both protecting the population and interdicting the enemy.”²⁶⁷

This operation succeeded despite huge odds because of the care taken in executing it. First, the army used “corner, choke, and contain” joint air-land tactics that interdicted the Taliban at high altitude hideouts with Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs), forcing them to climb down from the mountains and find cover in mosques, schools, homes, and behind human shields²⁶⁸—enraging the local population. This improved human intelligence and political support for the operation. Second, the army

²⁶⁴ *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA*. Washington D.C.: International Crisis Group (ISG), Asia Report No 178, 21 October 2009, 8. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6356> (accessed December 2, 2009).

²⁶⁵ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 20.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

executed a “presence-oriented” approach: it systematically cleared areas, held them with small numbers instead of falling back to firm bases, enforced curfews, and assisted the local government to reassert its writ.²⁶⁹ The Pakistan army has left behind 20,000 troops in Swat to “hold” it and prevent it from falling back to the terrorists.²⁷⁰ The Pakistan army killed 1,600 terrorists and arrested 700 before the operation concluded in July 2009.²⁷¹

Having effectively cleared Swat of terrorists, the Pakistan army launched another daring offensive in the SWA against the epicenter of Jihad in Pakistan—the nerve center of the TTP. Some analysts described this battle in advance as the “mother of all battles” in view of the colonial history of the SWA, as well as the army’s three previous embarrassments there in 2003, 2004 and 2008—all ending in controversial peace deals with the Taliban.²⁷² Code named *Rah-e-Nejat* (Path to Salvation), the October operation involved over 30,000 Pakistani troops, and relied on the successful Swat hybrid COIN strategy with little variation. Three infantry Divisions took part in the operation.

This time the army completely surprised the terrorists by adopting the “ridgeline approach” and closing in on its objectives from three directions simultaneously.²⁷³ This meant that the marching troops avoided using the main roads or tracks and instead dominated the heights to secure the valleys before advancing further. This tactic was supplemented with reconfigured “C-130 aircraft with surveillance eye-in-the sky capabilities” to ensure reliable intelligence—which acted as a force multiplier.²⁷⁴ According to intelligence estimates, there were 10,000 hard core terrorists present,

²⁶⁹ Mullick, *Helping Pakistan*, 21.

²⁷⁰ Imtiaz Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan or Beginning of a Long War,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol VII, Issue 38, December 15, 2009. http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35832&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=26&cHash=22a2efbd82 (accessed January 24, 2010).

²⁷¹ Yangtze Yan, “Pakistan Finishes Swat Operations, Facing Sore Challenges,” *China View*, July 17, 2009. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/09/content_11680849.htm. (accessed on December 23, 2009).

²⁷² Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan.”

²⁷³ Maliha Lodhi, “The Next Phase of Counter-Militancy,” *The News*, November 25, 2009.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

including 1,000 to 1,500 foreigners, mostly Uzbeks.²⁷⁵ The army completed the operation within six weeks, successfully disrupting and dismantling the nerve center of the TTP. To the surprise of the Pakistan army, when the operation commenced, ISAF pulled out its several posts opposite the SWA, which facilitated some terrorists to escape. This issue was raised with ISAF HQ in Kabul, which blamed a “lack of coordination” at the staff level.²⁷⁶



Figure 9. Three Pakistani Divisions clearing SWA from three directions (Operation Rah-e-Nejat).²⁷⁷

Several events turned the tide in favor of military action in the SWA: the successful Swat operation; the killing of TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud; and the final catalyst, the terrorist attack on the GHQ of the Pakistan army in October 2009, killing 20 (including a Brigadier and two Lieutenant Colonels), with credit claimed by the TTP.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan.”

²⁷⁶ “Lack of Coordination with Pakistan Unfortunate: U.S. General,” *The News*, December 13, 2009.

²⁷⁷ Downloaded from Ali Khan, “Exclusive-Operation Rah-i-Nijat,” After <http://pak1stanfirst.com/videos/viewvideo/116/talk-shows/editors-show-exclusive-operation-rahi-nijat.html> (accessed January 2, 2010).

²⁷⁸ Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan.”

As in Swat, two key factors ensured success for the Pakistan army: unstinting government, public, and media support to the army; and evacuation of inhabitants of SWA prior to the offensive—thereby, giving the army a free hand to use heavy weapons, including the air force.²⁷⁹ According to the military, more than 600 terrorists and 70 security personnel were killed by the end of this operation.²⁸⁰ The Pakistan army has already announced that it will now begin to consolidate the gains it has made in these areas by “holding” them and continuing its “build” efforts in keeping with COIN doctrine before opening other fronts elsewhere in the FATA.

D. CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN: THE NEW U.S. “AFPAK” STRATEGY

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship faces a series of challenges. Among these are: the need to stop unreasonable pressure on Pakistan to *act*; the impossible 18-month-long timeline; and the America’s penchant to discount the threat from India without resolving the core Kashmir dispute first. Both states must overcome the “on again” and “off again” nature of their bilateral relationship and turn this into a long-term strategic partnership—the U.S. must also stop pressing Pakistan to accept large numbers of military trainers and advisors. And both countries must work to restore the U.S. image in Pakistan.

Addressing these challenges is extremely important before the U.S. begins to disengage from the region in 18 months. Otherwise, the mess left behind will be like the mess created during the Afghan Jihad and in the post-Taliban period in Afghanistan, but worse, as it now involves a nuclear-armed state.

1. Mantra of “Do More”

President Obama’s new strategy is aimed at achieving a balance between those hawks who want to escalate in the war in Afghanistan and those who want a rapid withdrawal of NATO forces from the area. The purpose of the 30,000 troop surge is to demonstrate U.S. resolve to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. The Pakistanis, critical allies in the war, fear that an all out war given this surge will further destabilize

²⁷⁹ Lodhi, “The Next Phase of Counter-Militancy.”

²⁸⁰ Ali, “Military Victory in South Waziristan.”

Pakistan, as the Afghan Taliban will definitely run towards the FATA, thus, creating conditions that force Pakistan to *have* to act. Pakistan is already under increasing pressure from the U.S. to extend its operations into the NWA against the alleged Haqqani network.²⁸¹ Interestingly, Pakistan has done the opposite by announcing the cessation of military operations for the next six to twelve months in order to consolidate the gains already made against the TTP in Swat and the FATA.²⁸² The unreasonable pressure on Pakistan to act or “do more,” which, according to popular perceptions in Pakistan means “do all,” needs to end.²⁸³ The world needs to understand the limits of Pakistan’s cooperation. As it is, Pakistan considers itself a scapegoat for a failed U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and a victim of the incompetence of the Karzai government.

2. Impossible 18-Month Timeline

After great effort and cost, Pakistan has partially succeeded in establishing the writ of government in most of the FATA, after more than two years of bloody war. According to General Kayani, “only when you win over 70% [territorial and population control], are you really winning.”²⁸⁴ To get to this minimum 70% mark, 18 months is too short a time frame in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has influence in 33 out of 34 provinces. The disparity in control across the nominal Durand Line means the insurgents can slip from Pakistan to Afghanistan, just as they came from Afghanistan to Pakistan when hit hard by U.S. and coalition forces. Both sides will have to agree on a uniform strategy—either to fight or to seek conditional reconciliation. Otherwise, the insurgent syndicate will continue to play them both.

3. Discounting India

Pakistan’s plate is already full with combating the TTP, reacting to looming economic and political crises, and worrying about the Indian threat of a two front war.

²⁸¹ “Gates Wants Military Operations Extend to NWA,” *The News*, January 22, 2010.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Nawaz, *FATA*, 16.

²⁸⁴ “Myth of South Waziristan Broken: Kayani,” *The News*, February 13, 2010.

Recently, General Kayani observed that the Indian “Cold Start Strategy”²⁸⁵ is an aggressive strategy, which Pakistan can ill afford to ignore.²⁸⁶ General Kayani has explained Pakistan’s position on Afghanistan by saying, “We have made it clear to the U.S. that it will have to keep in view the interests of Pakistan before taking any decision with reference to Afghanistan.”²⁸⁷ Pakistan has offered to train the ANA and the ANP, a task presently being undertaken by the Indians with the American and Afghan governments’ blessings.²⁸⁸ A strong Afghan army (when it reaches its planned strength of 250,000) in concert with Indian influence in the west, will put Pakistan into a nutcracker situation when there is already an Indian army of over a million strong breathing down its neck in the east.²⁸⁹ Pakistan’s insistence on assisting the Afghans is not unreasonable, since Pakistan is a direct neighbor, which India is not. From Pakistan’s point of view, Pakistan should reap the benefits of the sacrifices it is making in support of the war in Afghanistan. India should not be permitted to benefit at the expense of Pakistan’s dirty and bloody work of fighting the terrorists. What confuses Pakistan is why the allies do not recognize this.

4. Building Trust

President Obama has admitted that the U.S. partnership with Pakistan is “inextricably” linked to the U.S. efforts in the region.²⁹⁰ Consequently, the U.S. has been trying to assure Pakistan of its long-term partnership. Secretary Robert Gates, on his visit to Pakistan in January 2010, remarked, “...when the Soviet Union left the region and the U.S. largely abandoned Afghanistan and cut off defense ties with Pakistan—[that was] a grave mistake driven by some well-intentioned but short-sighted U.S. legislative and

²⁸⁵ This strategy aims to cut the Indian military’s long mobilization period, which can be countered by the Pakistan army due to Pakistan’s smaller size. Indian military thinkers plan to seize or destroy important shallow objectives across the international border, or in the disputed territory of Kashmir, remaining below the *nuclear* threshold of Pakistan. India envisages exercising *escalation control* to avoid crossing Pakistan’s nuclear threshold.

²⁸⁶ “Pakistan Cannot Ignore Aggressive Indian Strategy, Says Kayani,” *The News*, February 4, 2010. .

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Nizami, “Kayani’s Glasnost.”

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ President Obama, “The New Way Forward.”

policy decisions.”²⁹¹ The commitment of \$7.5 billion in civilian aid, over and above U.S. military assistance, and the provision of eighteen F-16s and shadow drones are important steps that demonstrate U.S. commitment. High-level talks and strategic dialogue between both states in March 2010 is another significant indicator of improved relations among these estranged allies.

From Pakistan’s perspective, it has always delivered results when it and the U.S. cooperate and work for their common interests; however, in return Pakistan feels it has been abandoned at numerous critical junctures by the U.S. Pakistan’s only grievance with the U.S. stems from the U.S.’s biased policies in the region. The growing Indian involvement in Afghanistan is creating a strategic imbalance from Pakistan’s point of view. The U.S. thus needs to do more to allay Pakistan’s genuine security concerns regarding India and in recognition of Pakistan’s (not just India’s) nuclear status—the only strategic indicators for Pakistan when it comes to a meaningful U.S. commitment. Understandably, the U.S. finds itself in a dilemma as it seeks to maintain relations with both nuclear armed rivals in the region while also protecting its own strategic interests.

5. U.S. Military Advisors / Trainers

Another challenge is U.S. insistence that Pakistan accept U.S. trainers to overcome the lack of training of the FC NWFP in COIN. Pakistan refused to accept U.S. trainers for the FC and the military in 2008 to avoid any U.S. footprint or impingement on its own COIN efforts in the FATA.²⁹² The U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) extends assistance to partner nations under its Foreign Internal Defense (FID) program, but these can come in a variety of forms.²⁹³ The Pakistan government has also resisted large numbers of U.S. advisors, or any large-scale military presence in Pakistan, because of its justifiable concerns over public outrage. Despite Pakistan’s resistance, the U.S. has nevertheless “managed” to assign a force of fewer than a hundred

²⁹¹ Robert M. Gates, “Our Commitment to Pakistan,” *The News*, January 21, 2010.

²⁹² Nawaz, *FATA*, 34.

²⁹³ For more on the ways in which the U.S. can most effectively assist Pakistan military without American boots on the ground, see Jason Johnston and Stephen Taylor, “Effective and Efficient Foreign Internal Defense in Pakistan,” M.S. thesis, NPS, Monterey, CA, June 2010.

trainers to the FC NWFP, which has led to a political backlash in Pakistan. The people in the FATA resent the Pakistan army—the American presence will only cause further, and potentially insurmountable problems for Pakistan army's efforts there, and spoil the good will it had earned after eight years.

The recent killing of three U.S. SOF soldiers in Dir NWFP from a vehicle born suicide attack has brought the American presence into the spotlight and people are questioning what business the Americans have in those troubled areas.²⁹⁴ Where those SOF personnel were killed was certainly *not* the training area, but one of the operational areas instead. People are wondering why the FC NWFP is being trained by the Americans and not by the Pakistan army? For instance, they wonder whether the role of the FC NWFP has been redefined from border security to specialized COIN activities? The Pakistanis have great pride and faith in their own armed forces, which are fully capable. What Pakistan most needs is the political, economic, and military support to combat the terrorists—not “foreign” advisors, as these will only complicate rather than contribute to the Pakistan army's efforts in the FATA.²⁹⁵

6. Improving the U.S. Image in Pakistan

Improving the U.S. image among the Pakistani public is a paramount challenge. The major reasons for anti-American sentiment in Pakistan are partly historical and partly due to the ongoing U.S.'s drone attacks in the FATA.²⁹⁶ Any increase in the U.S. footprint, with simultaneous drone attacks in the FATA—whose frequency has dramatically increased since President Obama took the office—will only inflame these

²⁹⁴ Amir Mir, “Killed Americans were Part of 100-Strong Commando Unit,” *The News*, February 4, 2010.

²⁹⁵ Again, for corroborating argument made by two USSOF officers, see Johnston and Taylor, “Foreign Internal Defense in Pakistan.”

²⁹⁶ According to a Maryland Polling Group Survey, 82 % of Pakistanis disapprove the drone attacks in the FATA. For more information, see the report by Paul Eckert, “Pakistanis Turn on Taliban, But Resent U.S. – Poll,” *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, July 1, 2009. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N30441851.htm> (accessed August 30, 2009).

sentiments.²⁹⁷ Pakistanis consider these aerial attacks to be a violation of their sovereignty. Worse, these attacks are counterproductive since 90% of the time civilians are killed.²⁹⁸

These attacks also create serious problems for the Pakistan army and are a source of constant embarrassment to the Pakistan government. Certain officials within Pakistan believe that the drones are effective, but they are shy to admit this openly due to their fear of public outrage. The Pakistan government needs to stop being hypocritical, as this hypocrisy is harming it more than it is harming the U.S. Both governments need to adopt a method by which to employ the drones in the FATA in a transparent, coordinated, and joint manner. It is not right for the U.S. to take all the blame. Pakistan, after all, has demanded the transfer of drone technology from the U.S. However, until this occurs, better options for employing these drones must be developed.

Because these attacks produce “accidental guerrillas” in large numbers, interior Pakistan has been struck by retaliatory suicide attacks, which in turn have adverse impacts on the political, security, and economic conditions in the country. The slain TTP leader, Baitullah Mehsud, proudly said in an interview that “I spent three months trying to recruit and only got 10–15 persons. One U.S. attack and I got 150 volunteers.”²⁹⁹ If the U.S. really intends to help Pakistan get rid of terrorism and extremism, then it also needs to fulfill the pledge by the Bush administration to establish ROZs in the FATA as a genuine goodwill gesture. Instead of ensuring that fragile and corrupt governments in Pakistan stay addicted to *aid*, it will be better to enhance *trade* with Pakistan, which will bring prosperity to the *people* of Pakistan, automatically countering the conditions that breed extremism.

²⁹⁷ Seven hundred and eight people have been killed in the FATA in 2009 alone, the vast majority being tribal men, women, and children. Only five to seven suspected Al-Qaeda and Taliban elements were killed in 44 Drone attacks during this period. See “Over 700 Killed in 44 Drone strikes in 2009,” *Dawn*, January 2, 2010. Also see FACTBOX-U.S. Drone Attacks in PAKISTAN, *Reuters*, July 11, 2009. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/ISL478200.htm> (accessed August 2, 2010).

²⁹⁸ Mir, “Pak-U.S. Ties at the Lowest Ebb.”

²⁹⁹ Nawaz, *FATA*, 18.

E. CONCLUSION

Finally, the government should target the insurgents armed with specific, local information derived from long and close association with the population. Not rocket science—but if it were, western militaries would be better at it. Sadly, the military-industrial complex does not build many tools for fighting counterinsurgencies.³⁰⁰

The U.S. loses if the insurgents cannot be defeated or at least incapacitated very soon. This is the reality of guerrilla warfare where an insurgent is deeply invested in the long term struggle against the limited time line available to the occupying soldier whose actions are bound by democratic and political caveats. A strategy only functions when there is clarity of goals and clear understanding about the enemy. According to Steve Coll, “a Taliban victory would have devastating consequences for U.S. interests. But to avoid disaster, America must beware of the Soviet Union’s mistakes—and learn from its own three decades of failure in South Asia.”³⁰¹

Most observers now believe that Afghanistan’s security largely depends upon its relations with its neighbors, most importantly Pakistan. Instead of a common belief that stability in Afghanistan is hinged upon Pakistan, though, the opposite is actually the case. The need to adopt a new “AfPak” strategy was one response to the fact that the earlier U.S. strategy lacked a clear direction, consequently creating space for the Taliban to regroup. However, given the explosive regional environment, the scarlet thread of *any* U.S. strategy in Afghanistan should be the one that does not destabilize *nuclear-armed* Pakistan any further. The U.S. must provide what Pakistan requires to enhance its indigenous capabilities (e.g., much-needed economic and political support, and military equipment) without any caveats, or without any fear of Indian pressure. To achieve this, the U.S., Pakistan, and Afghanistan need to work, more closely than ever before to bridge their differences in order to find a meaningful solution to this protracted and bloody war. This can happen only if trust can be developed among these most important actors in the conflict, and only via the adoption of long-term measures and commitments.

³⁰⁰ Nagl in Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, viii.

³⁰¹ Coll, “The Case for Humility in Afghanistan.”

Ironically, a limited agenda in Afghanistan will not adequately address the challenges Afghanistan poses to U.S. security. Instead, the U.S. needs to expand its scope in search of genuine peace and security. The available “means” must shape the strategy, not the reverse. The financial and human costs in maintaining a future presence in Afghanistan are becoming difficult for the U.S. from every angle. As Kilcullen notes, there is only one option to succeed in Afghanistan: *prevent* the resurgence of al Qaeda sanctuaries, *protect* the Afghans, *build* state institutions and then *hands-off*.³⁰² As he further says, “The hard fact is that however unpalatable, this option is a hill we simply have to climb if we seek anything worthy of the name “success” in Afghanistan.”³⁰³

But, this is only possible if the U.S.—in sync with the Afghan government—uses the political tool as its main source of power—both within and outside of Afghanistan. By adopting “best practices in COIN,” which are population-centric, instead of the practices that are biased towards CT or kinetics, a respectable solution may yet be found.³⁰⁴ This also means taking into account the ambitions of the other actors—neighbors, potential allies, and spoilers alike.

³⁰² David Kilcullen, “Crunch Time in Afghanistan-Pakistan,” *Small Wars Journal*, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/02/crunch-time-in-afghanistanpaki/> (accessed February 9, 2009).

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Kalev I. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May–June 2005: 7–12).

V. THE REGIONAL POWER POLITICS

A. INTRODUCTION

Most analysts have realized that the war in Afghanistan cannot be fully understood in isolation. President Bush's Global War on Terror (GWOT) generated much debate. By invading and putting boots on the ground in Afghanistan, the U.S. and NATO automatically became entangled in the "most perilous" region in the world—according to President Bill Clinton's assessment.³⁰⁵ There is no way now to stop the impact of the stakeholders' conflicting interests. This region was the victim of the "Great Game" between two imperial powers in the nineteenth century, and then again during the Cold War—and still suffers from their bitter legacies. Afghanistan forms a buffer between Central Asia and South Asia, regions which have been plagued by intra and inter-state disputes since the end of their respective colonial eras. Capturing or killing Bin-Laden might be the most important goal for the U.S. in Afghanistan; however, there is no denying the fact that the U.S., like other regional and international actors, also has strategic interests in this region.

This chapter will touch on the conflicting interests of Afghanistan's neighbors and other important actors to highlight the negative impact of power politics on this conflict. Each of Afghanistan's neighbors has ethnic ties with Afghans, through which these neighbors have built spheres of influence in the country over the centuries. Without the help of and accommodation by these actors, the U.S. can forget about any positive outcome from this protracted war. In February 2009, General David Petraeus rightly said that "in fact, those seeking to help Afghanistan and Pakistan need to widen the aperture even farther, to encompass at least the Central Asian states, India, and even China and Russia."³⁰⁶

This chapter will review the conflicting interests of Iran, India, China, and Russia in Afghanistan and Central Asia. While discussing these states we will also consider the

³⁰⁵ Judith Miller and James Risen, "A Nuclear War Feared Over Kashmir," *The New York Times*, August 8, 2000.

³⁰⁶ CRS, *War in Afghanistan: Strategy*, 32.

U.S.'s and Pakistan's interests in them, which will provide readers a fair idea about the ongoing power politics in the region, apart from just the war in Afghanistan.

B. IRAN

With the Iranian revolution and then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Iran's objectives in Afghanistan changed. The U.S. hostage crisis of 1980 in Tehran transformed two former allies into enemies. Although Iran staunchly condemned the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, it still maintained amiable relations with the USSR. During the Soviet occupation, Iran's policy was confined to creating an "ideological sphere of influence" among the 20% Shi'ite population in Afghanistan.³⁰⁷ Since then, Iran has had a security-centered foreign policy of protecting and expanding its interests, and neutralizing the perceived threat from the U.S., a threat Tehran regards as existential.³⁰⁸ A stable Afghanistan, with Herat as a buffer zone, and a friendly government in Kabul is in Iran's interests. Throughout its occupation, the Soviets kept a "hands-off" policy toward the Shi'ite population in Afghanistan, a concession to the Khomeini regime. Consequently, there was no resistance from this sect of Muslims against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

At the international conferences prior to the Soviet withdrawal, Washington and Moscow pledged non-interference in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, their pledges created a dangerous vacuum, sucking Pakistan, India, Iran and Saudi Arabia into proxy warfare during the post-Soviet period.³⁰⁹ Saudi Arabia sought expansion of *Wahabisim* in Afghanistan and the CARs, while Pakistan sought a Pashtun-dominated government that would accept the Durand Line as a border and allow this to become a lucrative bridge connecting the CARs with the Arabian Sea. Such developments would also provide Pakistan with "strategic depth" against its archrival, India.

Iran's and India's objectives clashed with Pakistan's and Saudi Arabia's. Because of this, Afghanistan and Pakistan remained areas for proxy battles between 1989 and

³⁰⁷ Mohsin M Milani, "Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan," *The Middle East Journal*; Vol 60, No 2, Spring, (2002): 235–257, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4330248> (accessed January 12, 2009).

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 235.

³⁰⁹ Ibid. 239.

1996. Even before the Soviet withdrawal, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani announced in 1987 in Moscow that “we are prepared to assist you, so that after departure there will be no U.S. domination in Afghanistan.”³¹⁰ Tehran, subsequently worked to expand its “political sphere of influence” by encouraging Shi’ite groups and non-Pashto speaking groups (e.g., Dari) to form the Hezb-e-Wahdat party in 1990, which later allied itself with the NA (and with both Tajik commander Ahamad Shah Masud and Uzbek commander Rashid Dostum).³¹¹

The Taliban takeover of Kabul in 1996 with Pakistani and Saudi assistance delivered a severe blow to Iran in Afghanistan; Iran openly supported the NA. The NA continued to prove a challenge for the Taliban, since it maintained its sovereignty in the Panjsher valley. Although the U.S. refrained from openly supporting the Taliban in order to avoid further damaging relations with Russia and Iran, the U.S. signaled its tacit support to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.³¹² Meanwhile, Pakistan announced development of Gwadar port in 2000, Iran started work on its port in Chabahar with Indian assistance: the aim is for this to provide Central Asia with access to warm waters.³¹³ India is also building a road from Chabahar, running parallel to the Pakistan-Iran border before entering Afghanistan, on its way to the CARs.³¹⁴

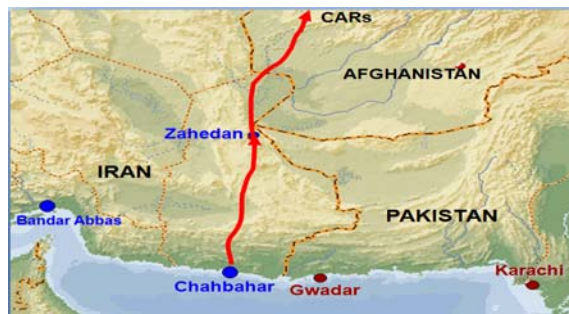


Figure 10. Chabahar port and construction of road by India to Afghanistan.

³¹⁰ Milani, “Iran’s Policy,” 240.

³¹¹ Ibid., 241.

³¹² Rashid, *Taliban*, 172–82.

³¹³ Zaid Haider, “Baluchis, Beijing, and Pakistan’s Gwadar Port,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Winter / Spring (2005): 95–103, 96.
<http://www.stimson.org/southasia/pdf/GWADAR.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2010).

³¹⁴ Khan, “History of Afghanistan.”

Clearly, the U.S. does not want Iran to benefit from achieving the shortest pipeline between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to Arabian Sea³¹⁵—and not when UNOCAL (American oil company) and DELTA (Saudi oil company), along with India and Pakistan, would be major beneficiaries of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project instead.³¹⁶ Knowing this, it then serves Iran's and Russia's purposes to keep the region unstable by backing an anti-Taliban alliance so that U.S. pipelines planned to run through Afghanistan and Pakistan are never built.³¹⁷

The dismantling of the Taliban regime by the U.S. in the aftermath of 9/11 amounted to a unintended favor to Iran from its enemy. Ironically, U.S. policies helped Iran to regain its regional power status by removing Iran's major threats in its immediate neighborhood: namely, the Taliban and Saddam regimes.³¹⁸ After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran's focus shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq. Within a short span of time, Iran extended its sphere of influence in Iraq. Today, Iran possesses better levers for bargaining with the U.S. than it did in 2001—being in the middle of two theaters in which America is embroiled in protracted insurgencies. Iran has considerable influence in both these theaters, and in the region. Iran's unflinching stance on its nuclear program can be seen as one consequence of these developments, which have emboldened Iran to stay the course given U.S. vulnerabilities and U.S.'s deteriorating international standing. Tellingly, China has refused to support any tougher actions against Iran over its nuclear program. Although Secretary Clinton warned China about "economic insecurity and diplomatic isolation,"³¹⁹ Beijing is itself upset about the U.S. decision to sell \$6.4 billion worth of arms to Taiwan.³²⁰ Consequently, the U.S. may not get the support it needs from the UN Security Council for tougher action against Iran from either China or Russia.

³¹⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 155.

³¹⁶ Milani, "Iran's Policy," 243.

³¹⁷ Rashid, *Taliban*, 179.

³¹⁸ Milani, "Iran's Policy," 247.

³¹⁹ Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, "Iran Caught up in China-U.S. Spat," *Asia Times*, February 2, 2010. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/LB02Ak02.html (accessed March 3, 2010).

³²⁰ Ibid.

As Western pressure has built over Iran's nuclear program, the U.S. has noted Iran's increasing support to the Taliban—a claim confirmed by Secretary Gates.³²¹ Iran has the ability to pull Hezbollah's strings in Lebanon against Israel, raise Shi'ite resistance in Iraq, and continue providing assistance to the Taliban in Afghanistan. While the U.S. hopes to involve Iran in a dialogue on Afghanistan (AfPak Policy), the U.S. itself is allegedly involved in supporting a militant group called "Jundallah" in Iran, which has sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan's Baluchistan province.³²² Iran's suspicions have created further a rift between both neighbors. Iran also accuses the U.S. and UK of sponsoring the opposition led post-presidential election protests in Tehran.

The absence of Iran from the London conference of February 28, 2010 on Afghanistan should not be taken lightly, since it is an important stake holder with considerable influence in Afghanistan. For as long as the U.S. is present on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, the possibility of an Israeli or a joint U.S.-Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear sites remains low due to the U.S.'s extremely vulnerable position in both theaters of war and Iran's improved position in the region, as well as its relations with Russia and China.

C. INDIA

Indian foreign policy is based on being an "undisputed champion of all nonsense realists, a monster of cunning and bluntness." Or so wrote *Kautilya*, an ancient Indian in his *Arthashastra*, or science of politics, in 300 B.C.E.³²³ Kautilya's recent equivalent is Machiavelli. In Kautilya's analysis of international relations, a leader must assume that "all neighboring states are enemies, whereas, by contrast, any state on the opposite side of the neighboring state is a potential ally."³²⁴ Or, the enemy of my enemy

³²¹ Greg Bruno, "Iran and the Future of Afghanistan," *Council On Foreign Relations*, March 30, 2009. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/13578/> (accessed January 30, 2010).

³²² Muhammad Sahimi, "Who Supports Jundallah," *Frontline PBS*. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/10/jundallah.html> (accessed January 30, 2010).

³²³ Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist; Kautilya and His Arthashastra* (Oxford; Lexington Books, 2002), ix.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

is my best friend. A close analysis of India's relations with its immediate neighbors confirms Indian faith in the practice of this age old political philosophy.

During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, India, a champion of the Non-Aligned Movement maintained a neutral position. However, in hindsight, we can say India backed the Soviet occupation in order to retain its influence in Afghanistan and to assure it would continue to receive supply of military hardware from its major supplier, the USSR. This support was also a result of U.S. and Pakistan working together against the Soviets in Afghanistan. In the course of this, the U.S. overlooked Pakistan's nuclear program and resumed military and financial aid to Pakistan. Unfortunately, 9/11 helped reconstitute closer Pakistan-U.S. relations, a development that India resents.

In view of South Asian turbulent history and India's political philosophy, its principle goal in Afghanistan after 9/11 has been a pro-India government that will protect Delhi's interests. India would like to deny the return of the Taliban or any pro-Pakistan government to Kabul in order to keep Pakistan under constant threat from two fronts. India also seeks to deny the use of Afghanistan as a base for terrorism in India and IHK. Finally, India seeks access to the CARs for economic and security reasons.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Jihadists' felt emboldened as victors. Having defeated a superpower in Afghanistan, they shifted their focus to IHK in order to end the Indian occupation and complete the unfinished agenda of Partition. The U.S. came under increasing pressure from India in 1992–93 to declare Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism.³²⁵ India accused Pakistan of shifting the Jihadists' bases from Pakistan to Afghanistan under the Mujahedeen allies and later the Taliban. Mullah Omar announced in 1998 that "we support the Jihad in Kashmir." He also accepted that certain Afghans were fighting against the Indian occupation forces voluntarily.³²⁶ India sought to deny this 'strategic depth' to Pakistan in Afghanistan. The hijacking of an Indian passenger plane in 1999, and its landing at Kandahar airport, exacerbated Indian fears

³²⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 186.

³²⁶ Ibid.

about Afghanistan's role in India's security paradigm. India had to release Masood Azhar (leader of Jaish-e-Muhammad) and Omar Sheikh (Daniel Pearl's kidnapper) with the hostages. Both reportedly fled to Pakistan.³²⁷

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, India gradually began to seek better relations with the U.S. India also declared Central Asia to be "our near abroad" in 1997, after proclaiming its ambition to become a global power.³²⁸ India's overarching goals in Central Asia are to: Secure a diverse energy base in competition with China; keep a check on the radical Islamist threat; check drug trafficking, a major source of terrorist financing; and use "India's commercial potential in the region to counter Pakistan's attempts of blunting the Indian presence through its geostrategic location."³²⁹ For instance, India is engaged in a 1,680 km-long pipeline project that will link it with Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Indian state-owned, Videsh Oil Company has also invested in Kazakhstan, a country that has large quantities of enriched uranium.³³⁰ This is significant, especially after India received its NSG waiver as a result of Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear cooperation.

It is worth noting that India, unlike Iran, has long refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, despite this, the Bush administration went ahead with a civil nuclear deal with India in an effort to open India to American defense companies (Lockheed Martin alone hopes to do \$15 billion worth of business within five years).³³¹ This deal, apart from its many other implications, is bound to plunge the region into a renewed arms race—both conventional and nuclear.

Also, Tajikistan, an important CAR, functions as a critical channel for funneling support to the NA in Afghanistan for India, Iran, and Russia (India provided \$8 million to

³²⁷ Musharraf, *In The Line of Fire*, 225.

³²⁸ Raghav Sharma, *India in Central Asia*. New Delhi, India: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPSC), Special Report, No. 63, January 2009, 2.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

³³¹ Pankaj Mishra, "Afghanistan: The India and Kashmir Connection," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol:57, No. 1 January 14, 2010. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=23558 (accessed February 15, 2010).

the NA in 2001).³³² Another Indian strategic arrangement with Tajikistan is acquisition of its first foreign “outpost” at Ayni airbase, where India has stationed a squadron of MiG 29s. This enables India to respond to threats emanating from Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Pakistan.³³³ From Pakistan’s perspective, India’s construction of the road from the Iranian port of Chabahar to Afghanistan increases its influence in Afghanistan. With its military base in Tajikistan, India is achieving a “strategic encirclement” of Pakistan, and to some extent of China, too.

In the post-Taliban period, India has heavily invested in development work in Afghanistan to protect its goals there and in the CARs. India’s pledged assistance to Afghanistan is over \$1.2 billion in a variety of sectors. The Indian government has delivered projects well in time and with consistency.³³⁴ While India is thus viewed as a reliable partner, Pakistan has serious concerns about India’s RAW activities in Baluchistan and the NWFP provinces in Pakistan.³³⁵

Mr. Karl Indurfurth, a former senior U.S. diplomat, advised in January 2008 that “Kabul should address Pakistan’s concerns on India, and its allies should urge Kabul to officially accept [the] Durand Line as the border between the two South Asian neighbors.”³³⁶ Even General McChrystal’s report, ‘Commander’s Initial Assessment,’ dated 30 August 2009 makes the critical point: “While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India.”³³⁷ Interestingly, in a joint statement issued after a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers at a NAM summit at Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 16 July 2009, India

³³² Sharma, *India in Central Asia*, 6.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³³⁴ For more details, see report by the Government of India. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *India and Afghanistan; A Development Partnership*. <http://meaindia.nic.in> (accessed January 30, 2010).

³³⁵ Ishtiaq Ahmed, *India-Pakistan Relations Post-Mumbai Terrorist Attacks*. Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), No. 89, January 7, 2010, 2. <http://www.isasnus.org/events/insights/90.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2010).

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³³⁷ *COMISAF’S INITIAL ASSESSMENT*, 2–11.

agreed to share information about terrorism in Baluchistan.³³⁸ India's Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, stirred up heated reactions from his Congress party and Hindu nationalists (the Bahartia Janata Party) over this statement—seen as a confession of India's involvement in Pakistan.

D. CHINA

Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.³³⁹ –Deng Xiaoping

China's interests in the region are mainly: to have a pro-China regime in Kabul that does not allow the export of Islamist ideology to China; to maintain a strategic relationship with Pakistan, which serves China's interests in the CARs and South Asia, and protects its Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean; and to support a counter to Indian and U.S. influence in its neighborhood. China showed little interest in Afghanistan previously. However, with Afghanistan's openness to foreign investment after the removal of the Taliban regime and with its own growing energy needs, China has invested \$3.5 billion in the Aynak copper fields—the biggest direct foreign investment in Afghanistan's history.³⁴⁰ As China is often said to be the U.S.'s closest near peer competitor, China's increasing involvement in Afghanistan conflicts with U.S. interests in the region.

China's 'wild West' province, Xinjiang, shares an insignificant stretch of border with Afghanistan. Altogether, Xinjiang province is bounded by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The Muslim Uighur community has been struggling for greater autonomy from the Han-dominated Chinese central government for decades. Xinjiang remains indispensable to China because of its abundance of natural resources

³³⁸ Ahmed, *India-Pakistan Relations*, 5.

³³⁹ U.S. Congress. Department of Defense. Annual Report from Office of the Secretary Defense. *Military Power of the People's Republic of China* (2008), 8.
http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/uploads/images/pAw-Xhv1qHB7cBNrkQbc3A/uscn_others_2008030301.pdf (accessed January, 11 2009).

³⁴⁰ Afghanistan has at least 1,596 million barrels of oil and 15,687 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves. Afghanistan also has large gold, iron and copper deposits. For more details see Nicklas Norling's, "The Emerging China-Afghanistan Relationship," *Analyst*, May 14, 2008.
<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4858> (accessed December 23, 2009).

and its location with regard to the CARs.³⁴¹ The Muslim majority Uighurs have been systemically reduced from 90% of Xinjiang's population in 1945 to 45–50% today due to increased Han settlements.³⁴² With the building of the Karakorum highway, linking Xinjiang province with the northern areas of Pakistan, China's fears of greater radicalization of Uighurs have also increased. Pakistan has taken all measures in its power to allay Chinese fears about any support from extremist political Islamist parties in Pakistan.

The Karakorum highway has both economic and military strategic significance. According to India, construction of this road is “a military sinister movement directed against India.”³⁴³ Perhaps India says this because China is such a reliable partner of Pakistan's, having provided considerable military hardware and assisted Pakistan in development of its nuclear and missile technology. China has always been supportive of Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and provides considerable political support to Pakistan in all international forums. Sino-Indian relations have been tense for two main reasons: the territorial disputes over Aksai Chin (Kashmir), and Arunachal Pradesh (90,000 sq km), and Indian support to the exiled Dali Lama regime of Tibet.

Among the major reasons for strained relations between the U.S. and China are: Taiwan, the status of Dali Lama, North Korea, and China's record human rights—as per U.S. perceptions. China is an emerging superpower, which automatically puts it on a potential confrontation path with the U.S. The U.S. “Nuclear Posture Review” in March 2002, and U.S. Congress's “Report of U.S.-China Security Review Commission” in July 2002, concluded that China's economic and military growth would pose a serious national security threat to the U.S., and suggested “rolling back” bilateral cooperation, especially in trade and high technology.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ Ziad Haider, “Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xingjian's Uighurs,” *Asian Survey*, Vol XLV, No 4, July/August (2005), 523.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 525.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 523.

³⁴⁴ Gladkyy Oleksandr, “American Foreign Policy and U.S. Relations with Russia and China after 11 September,” *World Affairs*, Washington: Summers 2003, Vol 166, Issue 1, 9.
<http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu/pqdweb?did=592370761&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. (accessed January 10, 2010).

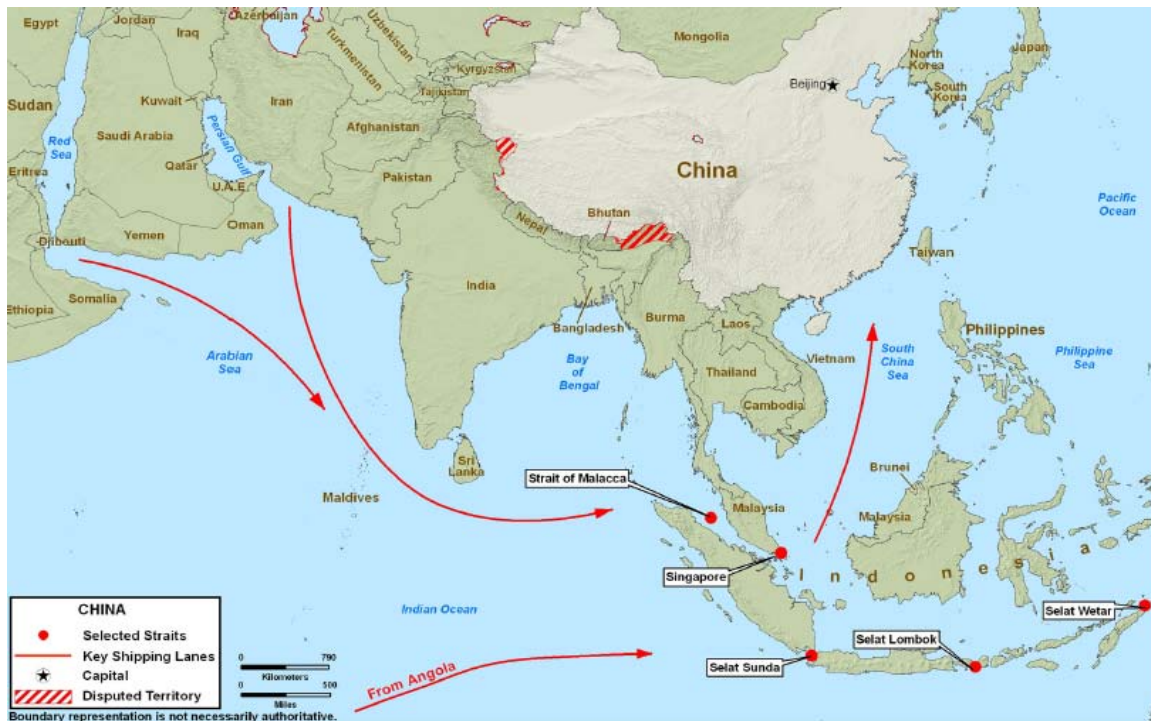


Figure 11. China’s critical sea lanes and disputed territory with India.³⁴⁵

As China grows, secure access to markets and diverse energy resources are essential to it maintaining and sustaining its growth. Against this backdrop is the need to secure the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. China currently consumes 7.58 million barrels of oil a day and is the world’s second largest consumer of oil after the U.S. (by 2015, this will increase to 10–12 million barrels per day).³⁴⁶ Eighty-percent of the oil China needs passes through the Malacca straits, fifty percent of which comes from the Middle East (Persian Gulf).³⁴⁷ China feels that its SLOCs can be all too conveniently threatened by U.S. and Indian dominance of the Indian Ocean, as well as by the U.S. naval presence in the South China Sea. For their part, the U.S. and India suspect China of pursuing a “string of pearls” strategy, which aims to secure ports along the rim of the Indian Ocean in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh in order to counter the vulnerability of its SLOCs. The Gwadar port in Pakistan and the port in Myanmar can be linked to

³⁴⁵ Downloaded from DoD’s, *Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*, 12.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

China's Xinjiang and Yunnan provinces, respectively, through pipelines that will further minimize China's dependence on the flow of oil through the Indian Ocean.³⁴⁸

To keep its options for alternative energy supplies open, China has shored up its overland sources from Kazakhstan (via a pipeline), Russia (via rail, with plans for a pipeline), and Turkmenistan (via pipeline).³⁴⁹ China cannot totally rely on oil from the CARs and Russia because the overland pipelines will be passing through Xinjiang province where there is the Uighur movement, and because relations between Russia and China are "fraught with cross-currents of competition, suspicion, and Russian energy policy paralysis."³⁵⁰ Since Russia continues to influence the CARs from every angle, China cannot put all its eggs into one basket.

Pakistan envisaged developing the Gwadar port as an outlet to the Central Asian energy resources after the CARs' independence. During President Musharraf's tenure, Pakistan signed an agreement with China to develop Gwadar, for which China agreed to finance 80% of the project costs.³⁵¹ President Musharraf expressed his gratitude to China by saying, "It is the friendship between China and Pakistan that has made my dreams of Gwadar come true. We thank China."³⁵² The Gwadar deepwater port has the capacity to become a major shipping hub for Central Asia, China, and the Middle East, as well as for bringing China most of the crude oil it needs.³⁵³

The U.S. and India fear that this is not merely a commercial project, but one which could be easily used and developed for military purposes in the future. Because of Gwadar's location, Baluchistan province assumes strategic significance within the overall

³⁴⁸ Corey S. Johnston, "Transnational Pipelines and Naval Expansion: Examining China's Oil Insecurities in the Indian Ocean," M.A. thesis, NPS, Monterey, CA, June 2008, 27–50.

³⁴⁹ *China's Arrival: A Strategic Framework for a Global Relationship*, ed. by Abraham Denmark and Nirav Patel. Washington, D.C.: Centre for New American Security, September 2009, 27. http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS%20China's%20Arrival_Final%20Report.pdf (accessed December 15, 2009).

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 28.

³⁵¹ Henry Chu, "China's Footprint in Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 2007.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

regional geo-political game.³⁵⁴ That makes Baluchistan of especial significance to both India and Iran, which further complicates Pakistan's concerns.

E. RUSSIA

We cannot help seeing the uproar stirred up in some Western countries over the energy resources of the Caspian. Some seek to exclude Russia from the game and undermine its interests. The so-called pipeline war in the region is part of this game.—Boris Yeltsin (1998).³⁵⁵

Before exploring Russia's principle interests, it will be prudent to have a look at U.S. interests in this region. When President Bush first met President Putin on June 16, 2001, he expressed his feelings that, "Russia and the U.S. are not enemies, they do not threaten each other, and they could be good allies. Russia can be a strong partner; more than people can imagine."³⁵⁶ After 9/11, these former antagonists grew closer in light of the threat posed by international terrorism. Moscow did not object when the U.S. approached Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan for military bases in support of OEF. Regrettably, the unilateral renunciation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty of 1972 by President Bush on December 13, 2001 did alarm Russia.

The U.S. investment in Afghanistan and its engagement there and in Central Asia represents a long-term endeavor to meet its interests.³⁵⁷ The major U.S. interests in the region can be summarized as: defense of America and Europe from Islamic terrorism after the 9/11 attacks; the maintenance of access to airspace and territory in Asia; development of alternative energy sources; and promotion of democracy in the CARs (and South Asia).³⁵⁸ Consequently, removing the Taliban in 2001 and efforts thereafter to establish a viable and *legitimate* Afghan government under President Karzai have been critical to helping the U.S. achieve these goals.

³⁵⁴ For a discussion on the emerging political conflicts in and around Gwadar, see Robert Kaplan, "Pakistan's Fatal Shore," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 2009.

³⁵⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, 156.

³⁵⁶ Oleksandr, "American Foreign Policy," 4.

³⁵⁷ Stephen Blank, "U.S. interests in Central Asia and Their Challenges," *Demokratizatsiya*, Washington: Summer 2007. Vol 15, Issue 3, 312.
<http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.edu/pqdweb?did=1508966691&sid=3&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed January 10, 2010).

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Essentially, the U.S. wants to end Russia's monopoly over the distribution of oil and gas from the CARs, so that the U.S. and Western firms can compete in the exploration and distribution of these natural resources. The U.S. also seeks to isolate Iran from the CARs by urging states to bypass Iran, and threatening sanctions against those that do not comply with U.S. wishes.³⁵⁹ Two projected pipelines that bypass Iran and Russia are the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and TAPI. Not surprisingly, the U.S. does not object to them.

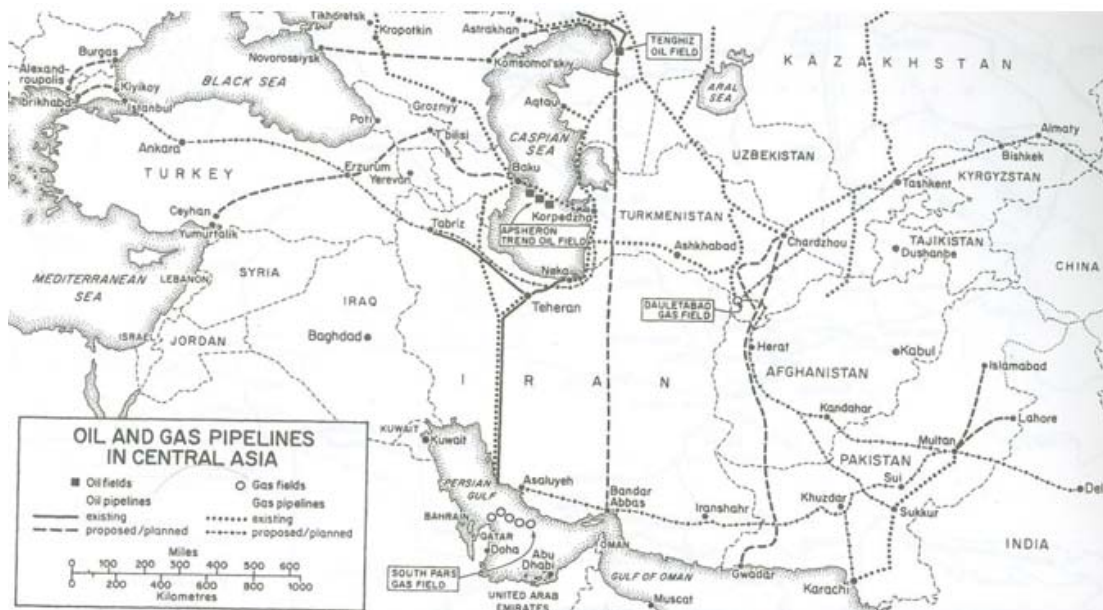


Figure 12. Existing and projected oil and gas pipelines from the CARs.³⁶⁰

Today, Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran are countering U.S. interests, as they view America's political and military presence as a threat to their security and interests in the region. Prior to 9/11, Russia had serious reservations about NATO's eastward expansion. President Putin had proclaimed that enlargement of NATO was "not necessary."³⁶¹ Russia is also wary of the U.S. desire to bring the CARs under its influence for all the

³⁵⁹ Blank, "U.S. Interests in Central Asia," 313.

³⁶⁰ Copied from Rashid's, *Taliban*.

³⁶¹ Oleksandr, "American Foreign Policy," 15.

reasons mentioned above. The Cold War does not seem to have ended entirely as Russia struggles to retain influence over its former states, while denying the same to the U.S. and the West. Russia supported the U.S.'s 'war on terror,' as in return, it received a free hand in Chechnya. Like Iran, Russia gained from the Taliban's removal. Still, Russia does not wish to have an indefinite American presence in such close proximity.

In order to check U.S. influence in the region, Moscow has increased its cooperation with China, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Russia has established a "gas cartel" under the guise of an energy club under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization forum, with Iran, Algeria, and Qatar also as members.³⁶² Meanwhile, through the "KazMunaiGaz deal," all natural gas produced in the CARs will be controlled by Gazprom, the world's largest extractor of natural gas.³⁶³ This implies that natural gas from any CAR is bound to transit through Kazakhstan and Russia on its way to market—putting Russia in firm control of these vast resources.³⁶⁴

This Russian monopoly over natural gas poses a threat to European energy security, as well as limiting the CARs' freedom. But, for Russia, any outlet for oil and gas from Central Asia on the Arabian Sea or through the Caspian Sea to Turkey would be a strategic, economic, and political disaster. Russia has shown its resolve to intervene militarily in states if its interests are threatened. Russia's spearheading of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), with the USSR's former states as members, is another effort by Russia to deny these states falling under NATO's shadow, as well as preventing the CARs from providing any military base to the U.S. or NATO without Russia's approval.³⁶⁵

For instance, under pressure from Moscow, Uzbekistan ordered the closure of the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) U.S. military base in 2005.³⁶⁶ The American's base at Manas, Kyrgyzstan may also close under similar pressure. In July 2005, the Kyrgyz government demanded an increase in rent to which the U.S. succumbed by pledging an additional

³⁶² Blank, "U.S. interests in Central Asia," 314.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 317.

\$200 million interest-free loan.³⁶⁷ General Richard Myers rebuked Russia and China over their pressure on Kyrgyzstan when he said, “it looks to me like two very large countries were trying to bully some smaller countries.”³⁶⁸

Pakistan seeks the pipeline projects from the CARs, all of which will keep alive U.S. Russian, Indian, Chinese, and Iranian interests—and potential interference. Since Pakistan holds a pivotal geostrategic location with regard to the successful completion of these pipeline projects, it will be subject to these competing interests—in addition to those sparked by the Afghanistan war. Russia has also not forgotten Pakistan’s role during the “Afghan Jihad,” which led to its disintegration later. This also may be a contributing factor in Pakistan’s volatile current situation and a source of destabilization.

F. CONCLUSION

Guerrilla insurgency is quintessentially a political phenomenon; any effective response to it must be primarily political as well. [I]f insurgency and counterinsurgency are fundamentally political, then the primary goal of counterinsurgency policy should be peace. More broadly, lasting peace—that is, lasting victory—comes through conciliation.³⁶⁹

From a brief review of the conflicting interests of the important actors in the region, it is clear that peripheral gestures by the U.S. aimed at increasing cooperation will not end the fundamental disagreements that already exist among them. There are serious points of contention that prevent the development of amicable relations among some of these states. What is required, instead, are means of building trust and reciprocity instead of bulldozing along through bilateralism. The support that the U.S. received from friends and foes alike after the 9/11 attacks has largely dissipated due to Washington’s myopic concerns. In order to advance genuine cooperation and build stable relations, the U.S. needs to take a leading role in removing, for instance Russian, Chinese, and Iranian fears about the U.S.’s protracted presence in the region; these fears are genuine if one bears in

³⁶⁷ Rashid, *Decent into Chaos*, 340.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

³⁶⁹ Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The history and politics of counterinsurgency*, (2004) cited by Mark T. Berger, Kenneth Burgess, James Mauldin and Michael P. Sullivan in “De Ja Vu All Over Again: Counterinsurgency and the American Way of War,” *Intelligence and National Security* 22:6, December 7, 2007. 910–31.

mind the nature of their past and existing rivalries. From the perspective of most of other regional players, the U.S. does not belong in the region and, thus, its presence is considered to be interference in others' *domain*.

It will be impossible for the U.S. to sustain its presence in Afghanistan without reasonably accommodating these other states' genuine political, economic, and security concerns. If we include Iraq, too, in the equation, the U.S. is in a bind. So far, its actions have done more harm than good to international relations and to the conflict in Afghanistan. Ironically, the only two states with which the U.S. enjoys good relations in this region are Pakistan and India—the two archrivals.

In view of Pakistan's geo-strategic location, the U.S. has little choice but to rely on Pakistan with regard to the Afghanistan war and pursuit of the U.S.'s legitimate interests in Central Asia. Regrettably, the history of U.S.-Pakistan relations has not always been good, and the U.S. has not done all it can to re-cement relations (as we saw in Chapter III). The U.S. alone decided to occupy Afghanistan. However, now, for an honorable exit and protection of its interests in the region, the U.S. is in dire need of assistance, which in turn requires cooperation from *all* the important actors in the region, but especially as it finds itself at this most critical juncture of its protracted campaign.

Throughout this thesis, the impact of regional disputes has been highlighted so that readers may understand the dynamic nature of this overlooked aspect of the conflict. A prudent U.S. policy toward the region can facilitate a peaceful resolution of many of these disputes, something the U.S. must strive to achieve if it wants to remain engaged in the region for the long-term. Among other things, as the U.S. encourages India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to settle their disputes peacefully, either bilaterally or through mediation, it should guarantee them security until such time as the peace process yields effective, demonstrable peace. For its part, too, the U.S. needs to review its policy towards China, Iran, and Russia so that these states do not feel threatened by the U.S.'s long-term presence in the region, or else another Cold War will ruin the peace. In essence, much depends on how far the U.S. is ready to go beyond its current world view in order to take into account the world view of others. Only by adopting a balanced foreign policy can the US help ensure a durable peace in this or any other region of the world.

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